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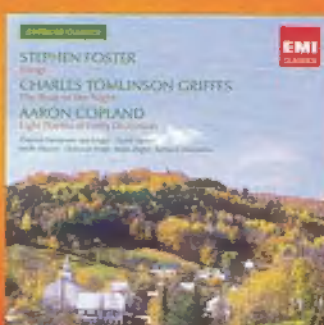
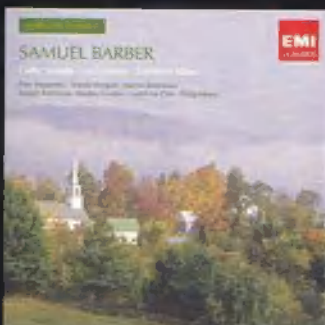
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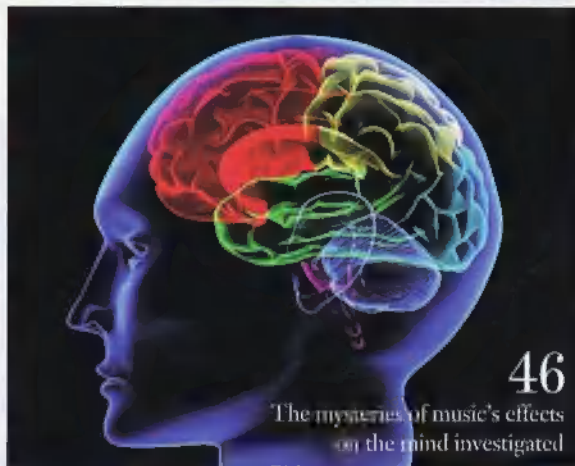
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\* Contributing editor



## Bands apart

"This," said Valery Gergiev, leaning towards me with a glimmer of amusement in his eyes, "is the first time I have ever stood on the conductor's podium and somebody else has told me what to do." I smiled with relief. The Ossetian maestro is a particularly commanding figure and I had been far from sure how he'd respond to being asked to pose for our camera.

The occasion was the cover shoot for our World's Greatest Orchestras feature. The London Symphony having made the top ten (but you'll have to turn to page 36 to find out where), we decided to put our highest-placed local band on the cover alongside, of course, their famous maestro. For the shot to work, we needed Gergiev to face front and conduct, to create that illusion of bringing the reader into the performance. I had been warned that he might not agree, but in the event he was delighted to enter into the spirit of the occasion. As indeed were the orchestra, manfully playing behind him at various different speeds ("a collector's item," as more than one player remarked to me after the least in-time Prokofiev performance that this distinguished orchestra can surely ever have given).

Yet the alacrity with which Gergiev embraced our requests demonstrates how highly he regards his new ensemble. The LSO is undoubtedly among the world's elite (confirming their utter professionalism during the shoot). Yet this is a fascinating time, when in some ways we are questioning our definition of what, or who, counts in that orchestral premier league.

Gone are the days when every decent orchestra had, and jealously guarded, its own unique sound. Similarly, all but gone are the days when there was an enormous gulf in terms of technical abilities between the better- and lesser-known bands. No, the Brighton Philharmonic players are not yet a match for their rather more famous New York equivalents. But the number of orchestras that can handle the most demanding of scores is fast expanding. Given these two factors, what distinguishes an orchestra among its competitors?

Something special is required. Something that you don't necessarily know until you hear it. We've set a panel of the world's finest critics (from which phrase I delicately exclude myself) to identify the orchestras that have it, and a clutch of great musicians join them in explaining their choices. Enjoy, join us in celebrating some magnificent ensembles, and more power to their bows!

*James Inverne*

james.inverne@haymarket.com

## CONTRIBUTORS



Hard to believe, but it has been 30 years since conductor **HARRY CHRISTOPHERS** launched his acclaimed choir The Sixteen. He writes about a special anniversary year for this month's Diary page.



Long-time (just-retired) science editor for *The Times*, **NIGEL HAWKES** investigates music's effects on the mind. "We can now peg the musical experience to the very brain cells responsible," he says, "making it all the more magical."



**KEN SMITH**, a leading music journalist and regular *Gramophone* contributor, takes on the somewhat daunting task of listening to all the available recordings of Mahler's mighty Eighth Symphony for this issue's *Collection*.

While we will endeavour to help with telephone or written enquiries, time pressures within our busy editorial office mean that we may not be able to respond as promptly as we would wish.

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8.669019

### MENOTTI

#### Amahl and the Night Visitors

"The work's appeal [Amahl and the Night Visitors] is obvious. Menotti's music is attractive and unfailingly lyrical."

*The New York Times*



8.571900

### BAZZINI

#### Virtuoso Works for Violin and Piano

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*The Times*



8.570568

### TCHAIKOVSKY

#### Manfred Symphony

"Manfred's conflicts of joy and despair, doubt and elation... are perceptively probed by Vasily Petrenko and an RLPO on top form.... This is essential listening."

*The Daily Telegraph*



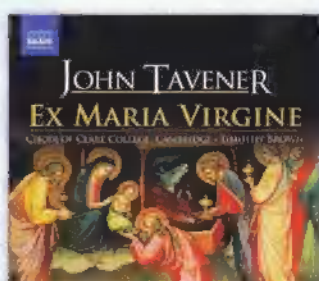
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### STANFORD

#### Symphonies • 1 & 2

"Lloyd-Jones proves an undisturbing, clear headed guide, while the playing of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra has an extra finish, buoyancy and lustre."

*Gramophone* on 8.570289, *Symphonies* • 1 & 2



8.572168

### TAVENER

#### Ex Maria Virgine

"The Choir of Clare College, Cambridge is secure and precise, delivering the text with excellent diction... Strong direction from Timothy Brown."

*BBC Music Magazine* on 8.557624



8.559359

### COPLAND

#### Dance Symphony

"[This disc brings] to renewed life a trio of works all too rarely heard... The whole performance is superbly judged.... a revelatory and richly recorded disc."

*The Daily Telegraph*



8.570496

### TIPPETT

#### String Quartets • 1

"A decade after his death, just as Michael Tippett's star seems to be waning, along comes this superb reminder of his classically crafted quartets... Excellent performances."

*Financial Times*



8.570321

### BRAHMS • SCHUMANN

#### Violin Concertos

"Quite simply, Kaler's new Naxos disc is one of the most astonishingly brilliant and satisfying violin recordings... that I have ever heard. A faultless recording."

*The Ottawa Inquirer* on 8.555395



8.570517

### LISZT

#### Piano Concertos

"Nebolsin is a Russian pianist with all of the technical skills necessary to handle this difficult music."

*American Record Guide* on 8.570327



# Letters

## Letter of the month

### Following Tod's nod to unknown Elgar

My November copy has just arrived, and I found the heartfelt tributes to Vernon Handley most moving – how sad that he has passed away before he could have become “Sir Tod”.

His wonderful discography must surely be the most serendipitous of all. My first experience of this was to buy on impulse his tape of Gordon Jacob's superb 1946 orchestration, initiated by Boult, of Elgar's G major Organ Sonata (almost a Symphony No 0), rescued from oblivion by Keith Best and Tod having only previously been broadcast once, to Jacob's disappointment. I fell in love with it and bought it again on CFP CD having worn out the tape. Although Richard Hickox has now made a second recording with BBC NOW I remain astonished that it is so neglected. The amateur orchestra I lead here in Somerset is just about to perform it for the second time in four years, having fallen in love with it the first time, and the parts we are using seem to be the original 1946 copies.

For those who fancy a dose of serendipity with Tod's CFP, the



bonus is both *Wand of Youth* suites, cherished by Andrew Achenbach (and me!).

Hywel Jenkins  
Glastonbury, Somerset, UK



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### Masterful Messiaen

Philip Clark (“Sanskrit Symphony”, Awards issue, page 73) might not be so quick to dismiss Maurice Le Roux's 1961 recording of Messiaen's *Turangalila-Symphonie* with the Orchestre National de la RTF (Accord 465 802-2) were he to hear the original LPs issued by Véga (VAL127, 3/63).

Sumptuously packaged in a sturdy box covered in silk (the colour – magenta – chosen by the composer, who also supervised the sessions), this was the first commercial recording of *Turangalila*, predating Ozawa's Toronto set by six years. Le Roux (1923–92), a long-time disciple of the composer, acquits himself well on the podium and makes up for any lack of fire with superior delineation of texture, especially winds, brass, piano and high percussion. While it may be true that the dry acoustic of the Salle des Fêtes at Puteaux, where the recording was made, was “uninspiring” (to quote Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone's definitive biography of the composer), it does

allow one to “hear into” the scoring to an unusual degree. Alas, every reissue, dating back to a two-LP set released on French Decca in the 1970s, has been a sonic travesty. At some stage in the transfer process, at least one engineer decided to “improve” things by shearing off the highs and submerging the result in a mud-bath of artificial reverb. What a pity; doubly so when one realises this is the only *Turangalila* recording that allows one to hear how the work sounded when French orchestras still sounded French. I urge Accord to go back to the original tapes and make a clean, honest transfer replicating as nearly as possible what the composer actually heard and approved in the studio.

Stephen C Hilmyer  
Evanston, IL, USA

### Latest edition

I read Mr Anthony Hicks's letter in the Awards 2008 issue with great displeasure. There are two issues that I'd like to address. The original exchange between David Vickers and myself over the possible date of Handel's first organ concerto

performances was friendly and with good spirit. I wished to make known the various “reports” by Burney and others that could suggest an earlier date than 1735. I in no way suggested this as fact. The word “report” makes it perfectly clear we are talking about second-hand information. If such a heavyweight Handel scholar as Mr Hicks states that Handel's earliest organ concertos were “undoubtedly” (a strong word for a musicologist) composed/performed in 1735, who am I to doubt him? I do hope he's not proved wrong.

Second, Mr Hicks's statement that our use of Walsh's editions for our Handel project is “absurd” is as offensive as it is laughable. Musicians should never blindly trust any edition of music, including those of Mr Hicks, without consulting critical commentaries and other primary sources such as original manuscripts. This of course was done during the preparation for our series of recordings. Contrary to Mr Hicks's assertion, I am well aware of musicological research over the past 30 years, and had access to the various “autographs and other

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reliable texts". Mr Hicks may have preferred me to use his editions, but I am more than comfortable with the decision to work from Walsh's sometimes excellent, clear and practical texts for our project.

I hope to enjoy a glass and discussion with Mr Hicks over these matters rather than waste your copy space any further on these matters – although I don't expect I shall be on Mr Hicks's Christmas card list.

Richard Egarr  
Music Director  
Academy of Ancient Music

Let us then consider the correspondence closed, and wish Richard Egarr and Anthony Hicks an enjoyable drink – Ed.

## Web words woe

May I echo a point made by one of your critics recently? One of my great delights when listening to Lieder recordings is to sit with the translations, so that I can fully understand and appreciate the poetry working alongside and within the music. I've noticed a disturbing trend for putting texts on the internet as an excuse for not including them with the issue.

But I don't want a load of A4 bits of printer paper messing up my shelves (they only fit with a lot of inconvenient folding in any case!). I want the texts to feel – and be – part of the original package. Please, record companies (Sony is in my mind because of their recent Christian Gerhaher disc, but there are others) remember that the words count as much as the music when it comes to Lieder!

Angela Feldman  
via e-mail

## Birtwistle beginnings

Armando Iannucci writes that he can't find anything to like by Birtwistle ("Finding my place", Awards). Perhaps he might start with the simple and digestible *Duets for Strab*, played expressively by flautists Philippa Davies and Helen Keen for the recording on Black Box.

Tom Moore  
Music Librarian, Duke University  
Durham, NC, USA

## Not the first

In the August 2008 issue (In the Studio, "Essential Senfi", page 79), you state that the July recording of



## Vasily Petrenko: time to turn the RLPO's talents to Myaskovsky

Senfi's *Paschali Mass* will be recorded for the first time with instrumental participation. I fortunately still have a vinyl recording (Decca Gold Label DL79420) from the early 1960s by the New York Pro Musica directed by Noah Greenberg performing the *Paschali Mass* which is accompanied by various original instruments (recorder, crumhorn, sackbut, organ, among others). Thought you and your readers might want to know.

Lloyd Nyce  
Harrisburg, PA, USA

## Wagner v Gardiner

It is surely unnecessary, some 135 years on, for John Eliot Gardiner to attempt to revive the old, discredited Brahms-Wagner dichotomy that polarised opinion in the latter half of the 19th century (Cover Story, October)? After all, discerning music lovers have long since learnt that it is possible to appreciate both.

JEG also criticised Wagner for "the lack of balance between the singers and the orchestra", and for a "density of texture" that he considers "irremediable". However, these are surely criticisms rather of how Wagner has generally come to be performed than of the music itself, for no one attached greater importance to such matters than Wagner himself – indeed, the Festspielhaus at Bayreuth was designed with a unique covered orchestra pit specifically so that the singers and text could be heard without difficulty, and the theatre still boasts some of the most carefully balanced acoustics of any opera house.

Given his credentials as a clarifier of Classical and Romantic orchestral textures through the application of period instruments and performance practice, it is a pity that JEG cannot see beyond his personal antipathy for Wagner the man, and instead direct his energies and renowned "forensic" skills to stripping back the thick layer of 20th-century accretions that have built up around the performance of Wagner and, in so doing, present us with a new, "slimmed-down" Wagner, fit for the 21st century. Since Wagner grew out of the same soil as Schumann, Mendelssohn and Brahms, JEG might actually find that his music is not as bad as he thinks it is.

Neil Harvey  
Lytham St Annes, Lancashire, UK

## More Myaskovsky

In the past decade we have been treated to a plethora of Shostakovich symphonies by the companies. Prokofiev's symphonies have also been well represented. While I fully acknowledge the greatness and importance of these two composers, I also feel that the works of Myaskovsky also contain much superb music.

The recent Svedanov release of all 27 Myaskovsky symphonies is very welcome, but the sound quality of some leaves much to be desired. I would very much like to see the likes of Gergiev or Petrenko, with their British orchestras, take up the challenge of championing some of this Russian music. This would certainly help to give a more rounded view of the greatness of Russian music in the Soviet era.

Jack Chantry  
Doncaster, S Yorkshire, UK

## Chapple quest

Jeremy Nicholas writes: In reviewing York Bowen's 1925 world-premiere recording of Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto (see page 107), I became intrigued by its conductor Stanley Chapple.

Born in 1900, he was guest-conducting the LSO at 21 and had a distinguished career in Europe before moving to America (Leonard Bernstein was Chapple's first student as director of the newly formed Tanglewood). I can find no reference to him after the mid

Wagner: not  
all that bad







1970s. Does anyone know how he spent his last years and when he died?

[jeremy@jeremynicholas.com](mailto:jeremy@jeremynicholas.com)

## Editorial note

Arthur Rubinstein recital (Awards issue, page 109): Wilfried Seifert writes to Jeremy Nicholas telling him that "as a young boy I was one of the lucky concertgoers to this Rubinstein recital in Nijmegen" and furnished the titles from "this unparalleled event" omitted from the CD. They are: Brahms's Rhapsody B minor from Op 79, Capriccio B minor from Op 76, Rhapsody E flat major from Op 119; two Chopin Etudes from Op 10, Nocturne in D flat major, Op 27 No 2, and "encores", the only one of which Mr Seifert remembers was the Villa-Lobos featured on the disc.

## Competition

**What's my line?** The October covermount competition invited you to identify the occupations of the characters in six operatic excerpts, all taken from EMI releases. They were **cobbler** (Ferdinand Frantz as Hans Sachs in Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*); **painter** (Robert Merrill as Marcello in Puccini's *La bohème*); **fisherman** (Anthony Rolfe Johnson in the title-role of Britten's *Peter Grimes*); **tenor** (Adolf Dallapozza as Alfred in Johann Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*); **doctor** (Marjan Rus as Bartolo in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*); and **barber** (Sesto Bruscantini as Figaro in Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*). A dozen CDs go to Simon Thompson of Edinburgh.

## OBITUARIES

### AL GALLODORO

Saxophonist, clarinettist and bass clarinettist  
Born June 20, 1913; died October 4, 2008  
Alfred Gallodoro was one of the world's longest continually active musicians, having begun his professional career aged 13, and giving his last performance at the Corning Jazz and Harvest Festival on September 20, thus spanning nine decades. His expertise on saxophone, clarinet and bass clarinet led to the nickname "Triple Threat".

Born in Chicago, he grew up in Alabama and New Orleans, before moving to New York. Gallodoro defies pigeon-holing, as likely to have been heard in symphony halls as nightclubs or jazz festivals. For four decades he played in jazz musician Paul Whiteman's orchestra, while in the classical field he played bass clarinet for 12 years in the NBC Symphony under Arturo Toscanini.

Gallodoro claimed to hold the record for the most performances of the clarinet slide in Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, having played it over 10,000 times – including in the 1945 Gershwin biopic of that name. Another film appearance was as a street musician in *The Godfather Part II*.



### GIANNI RAIMONDI

Tenor  
Born April 17, 1923; died October 19, 2008  
The Italian tenor Gianni Raimondi, a leading figure at La Scala in the 1950s and 1960s who partnered Maria Callas and many other eminent singers of the era, has died aged 85. The house described him as "one of the greatest voices in its history".

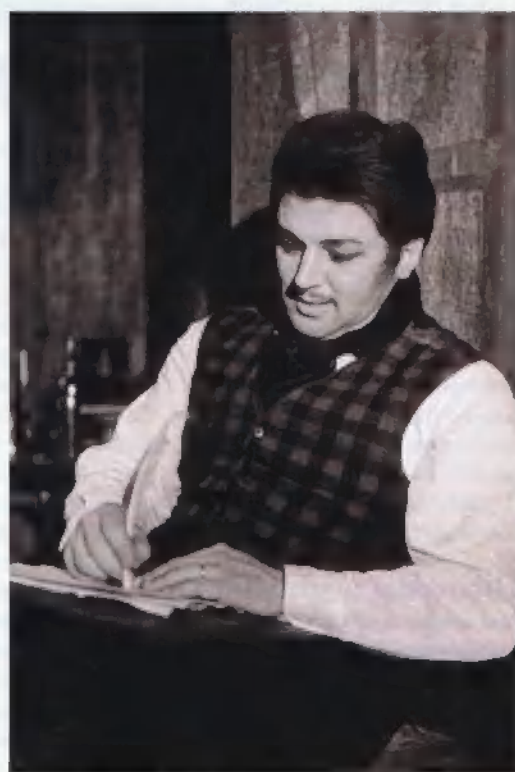
Born in Bologna, Raimondi started to consider an operatic career in his teens and went on to study under the legendary teacher Ettore Campogalliani. His formal debut came in 1947, the same year as Callas first appeared on the Italian stage, when he took the role of the Duke in *Rigoletto* at Budrio, near Bologna.

In the early 1950s Raimondi began to work alongside Callas, Giulietta Simionato and Renata Tebaldi among others and appeared in London in 1953 at the Stoll Theatre in *Traviata* and *Rigoletto*. Surprisingly, during a long and successful career, Raimondi never performed at Covent Garden.

Among 270 appearances, his debut at La Scala in 1956 is often referred to as a landmark, when he substituted for Giuseppe Di Stefano in the production of *La traviata* that Luchino Visconti created for Callas. From that point on he would become a cornerstone of the Milan house for the next 20 years.

He toured Europe and America in the 1950s, but did not appear at the New York Met until 1965, when he and Mirella Freni made their debuts side by side in *La bohème*. The role of Rodolfo, however, was already familiar to him, and the 1963 Scala production (now on a DG DVD), again with Freni, is regarded as a milestone in his career. He continued to appear on the international stage although Italy always remained the focus of his activity. He last appeared in the late 1970s.

His voice was noted for its power but also its unusual purity, which gave him an edge in his signature *lirico*



and *lirico-spinto* roles. It was a voice that endured, too, perhaps because Raimondi always sensibly refused to embark on the heavier Verdian parts such as Radames. In view of his successful stage career the tenor made surprisingly few live or studio recordings. Among the best known are *Anna Bolena* with Callas and Simionato from La Scala (EMI, 1957), and *La traviata* with Renata Scotta and Ettore Bastianini (DG, 1962).

**Charles Searson**



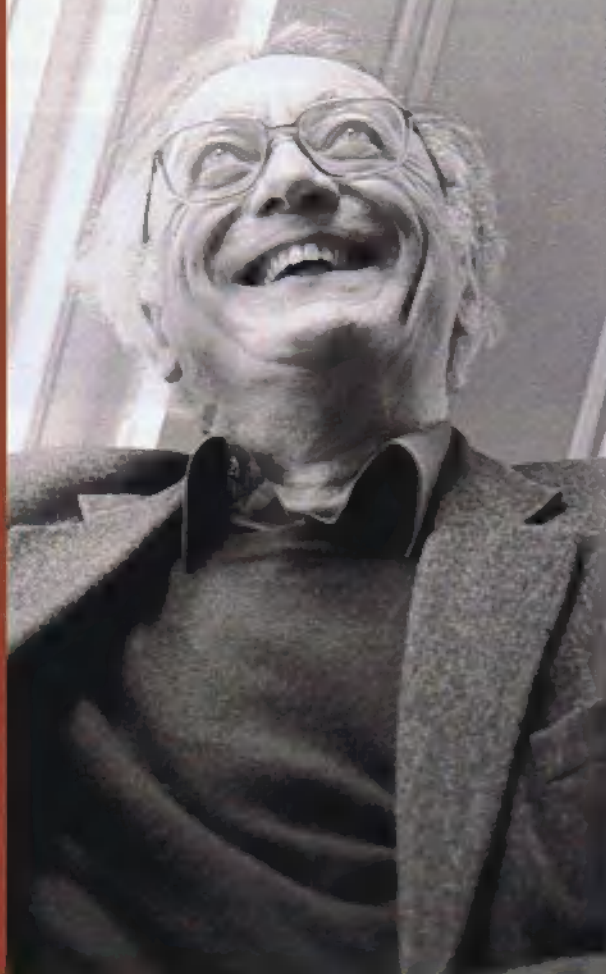
## Next month

BRENDDEL'S  
LAST BOW

A year ago, when news leaked out that Alfred Brendel was to retire from public performance, something akin to a period of international mourning ensued. On both sides of the Atlantic and beyond audiences scrapped for tickets to his remaining concerts, desperate for one more chance to hear one of the greatest pianists of our time. As he prepares to give his final concert, Brendel agreed to one very last major interview. He chose *Gramophone*.

Also in the January issue:

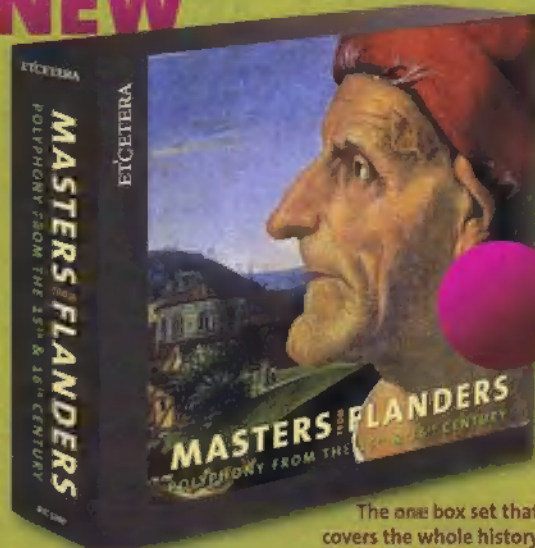
- Mike Ashman seeks the must-have recording of Mascagni's ever-popular revenge opera, *Cavalleria rusticana*
- It's not just Hannibal Lecter who loves Bach – Sir Anthony Hopkins reveals why he has taken to composing, in *My Music*



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# Editor's Choice



James Inverne's pick of this month's most outstanding new discs – you can hear excerpts on this month's free CD



## THIS MONTH'S SPECIAL CD FEATURE

**TRACK 1-6 GREAT ORCHESTRAS OF THE WORLD**  
Hear excerpts from recent recordings by some of the orchestras voted the world's greatest

Ravel, Debussy, Fauré  
String Quartets  
**quatuor ebène**



**TRACK 7 DEBUSSY, FAURÉ.**  
**RAVEL** String Quartets  
Quatuor Ebène  
Virgin Classics

What a sensational disc! At a time when there is a multitude of crack new quartets, Quatuor Ebène here stake their claim to join the top rank with riveting playing that encompasses an almost other-worldly sound-range. The Debussy especially left me reeling. With Ebène, the Pavel Haas players, the Belceas, the Pacificas, Jerusalems and more, chamber fans are in good hands for the next few decades at least.

► **REVIEWED ON PAGE 97**

## REISSUE OF THE MONTH



York Bowen, so admired by the likes of Saint-Saëns, was more than a pretty nifty pianist. On the evidence of this wonderful, all-but-forgotten-about collection, he was a virtuoso of the highest order. Not for nothing, it seems, was he known as "the English Rachmaninov". These discs show off Bowen the performer first and foremost; he plays Bach, Brahms and others. But there's plenty of Bowen the composer too. A gem.

► **REVIEWED ON PAGE 107**



**TRACK 8 BEETHOVEN**  
Complete Works for Solo Piano, Vol 6  
Ronald Brautigam *fp*  
BIS  
Critic Jed Distler goes rather delirious (in a good way) about this latest entry in Ronald Brautigam's Beethoven series. And it is rather terrific, Brautigam's crisp, agile and endlessly sensitive way with these sonatas providing a good period-instrument foil for Paul Lewis's recent Gramophone Award-winning collection.

► **REVIEWED ON PAGE 103**



**TRACK 9 'SOUVENIRS'**  
Anna Netrebko *sop et al*  
Prague Philharmonia / Emmanuel Villaume  
DG  
Any new Netrebko album these days is regarded as an event. But beware: to my mind the first few tracks of this new recital are strained and find her in poor voice. Once she hits form, however, there is plenty here to charm and beguile. Across a wide repertoire, the Russian soprano is typically lustrous, her voice rich and dark-hued. Apart from those opening tracks...

► **REVIEWED ON PAGE 116**



**TRACK 10 MAYERL**  
'A Miscellany'  
Leslie De'Ath *pf*  
Dutton Epoch  
Pianist Leslie De'Ath finds exactly the right style for this joyfully meandering miscellany. Virtuoso when required, he favours a laid-back, untroubled or sometimes pensive tone, letting the music sing. It's lovely stuff, and fascinating to read in the booklet-note that Mayerl, the toast of Britain, stayed away from the US because he was frightened of taking on Gershwin. What a rivalry that would have been!

► **REVIEWED ON PAGE 105**



**TRACK 11 BEETHOVEN**  
Symphonies Nos 4 & 7  
Manchester Camerata / Douglas Boyd  
Avie  
A surprise hit from Manchester (nothing against the Camerata's skills or reputation, but in this core repertoire there is a heck of a lot of more famous competition!) Here are chamber-size Beethoven performances that burst with character and drive. A fresh, exciting disc to place on the shelf alongside the best.

► **REVIEWED ON PAGE 77**





**TRACK 12 'DEBUT'**  
Sophie Cashell *pf*  
UCJ

You'll forgive us for being slow to join the widespread hype about this young pianist. She had, after all, won ■ TV talent show which, while good for the profile, is not always a reliable indicator of talent. Somewhat against the tradition of these shows, though, Sophie Cashell turns out to be an artist of genuine promise. A most enjoyable debut album that bears repeated playing.

►REVIEWED ON PAGE 107



**TRACK 13 HANDEL**  
Aminta e Fillide  
Soloists;  
La Risonanza / Fabio Bonizzoni  
Glossa

Glossa recently walked away with a Gramophone Award for its recording of Monteverdi's *Orfeo*. This Handel recording boasts some of that set's same virtues; a thrusting sense of spontaneity allied to (here, even more than in the Monteverdi) musical polish and committed vocal performances. And Fabio Bonizzoni's own sparkling playing at the harpsichord is ■ treat.

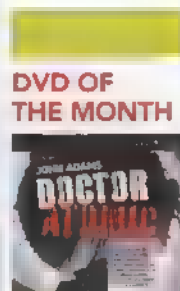
►REVIEWED ON PAGE 111



**TRACK 14 BEETHOVEN**  
Cello Sonatas Nos 1-3  
Daniel Müller-Schott  
w/ Angela Hewitt *pf*  
Hyperion

Angela Hewitt and Daniel Müller-Schott are forming quite a chamber-music partnership, following their Bach Gamba Sonatas album of 2007. This follow-up is similarly delightful, the pair of a mind – and a nimble, elegant one at that. They find the colour and fantasy ■ these Beethoven sonatas that, ■ with that Bach disc, give unalloyed pleasure.

►REVIEWED ON PAGE 95



**DVD OF THE MONTH**

Many new operas take time to find their audience. Opinions are divided about just how good *Doctor Atomic* is (both the DVD and a live Met performance are reviewed this issue, and neither is ecstatic about the work). Yet as ■ John Adams opera it is certainly important and viewers will want to make up their ■ minds. They won't get ■ better performance than this. Over to you.

►REVIEWED ON PAGE 125



## ALSO ON THIS MONTH'S CD

Discover which recording of Mahler's Eighth Symphony Ken Smith likes best  
►COLLECTION PAGE 54

Find out what music Robert Redford can't live without  
►MY MUSIC PAGE 162

**PLUS** Enter our Competition. Identify the excerpts and say who ends up marrying (or is married to) whom – for a chance to win a dozen CDs



**TRACK 15 SCHUBERT**  
Lieder, Vol 2  
Matthias Goerne *bar*  
Helmut Deutsch *pf*  
Harmonia Mundi

The second volume of Matthias Goerne's pianist-swapping Schubert Lieder edition for Harmonia Mundi by some way betters the first (and that ■ good). Remaining ■ the mellifluous, deep-centred voice – always easy to get addicted to – but here he also finds an attractive husky quality. Emotionally too, he is more varied, revealing patches of light as well as shade.

►REVIEWED ON PAGE 113

**TRACK 16 DEBUSSY** Complete Works for Piano, Vol 4  
Jean-Efflam Bavouzet *pf*  
Chandos

A momentum has been building throughout Jean-Efflam Bavouzet's superb Debussy exploration and there is a ■ of culmination in this, the fourth volume. With ■ still to go, the mind boggles ■ to how he will top this.

In fact, ■ of the ■ would be achievement enough. The fascinating thing about Bavouzet's Debussy is the way he upsets notions of how this composer should go, while still giving more than a nod to tradition. So here are the *Images* and 12 *Etudes* firm of hand, projected with a strength and sense of line that ■ might expect could dull the music's hazy brilliance. Yet there is never any danger of shifting sands congealed, as along with forward propulsion we get any number of

**'A leading contender for anyone looking for the must-have Debussy collection'**



miraculous, nearly hidden details. Imagination is never the slave of clarity, but clarity there is – the better to appreciate the richness of the prize.

Few pianists can have done all of these things at once in this repertoire so adeptly, ■ naturally. For anyone looking for the must-have Debussy collection, Bavouzet is surely the leading contender. Volume 2 of this series was piped to the post in this year's Gramophone Awards by Paul Lewis's Beethoven (which went on to claim the Record of the Year prize). It would be no surprise if, after this release, the Frenchman is in the running again.

►REVIEWED ON PAGE 104

CD of the month



» My top ten p18 » Interview p21 » Diary p23 » Philip Kennicott p25 » Armando Iannucci p26  
 » That Strain Again p28 » Encounters p32 » Quiz p33 » One to Watch p35

# Soundbites

## Dutoit named Verbier Orchestra director

Swiss conductor **Charles Dutoit** has been named as the new director of the Verbier Festival Orchestra for an initial three-year period from July 2009. The appointment comes as part of a restructuring of the festival, which is being funded by the UBS Foundation and the financial institutions of the Verbier Festival and the Verbier Festival Orchestra, which is based in the town of Valais, in the Commune of Bagnes, the Verbier Festival and a number of other local businesses and institutions. Alongside Dutoit's appointment, the festival's artistic director, **Takács-Nagy's**, will be stepping down from the Verbier Festival Orchestra music directorship.

"Charles Dutoit has achieved the status of a legend in the world of its achievements, with his work with the **Argerich**, **Cherubini**, **Traviata**, **United States** in **November 2007**, **Martin Engel** and **Dutoit** who knows this more than anyone else. So to us, it is a privilege to have him. The obvious choice for the Verbier Festival is on July 17th, the opening week of the festival, the **Philip Glass** welcome the Tour de France – and runs until August 2.

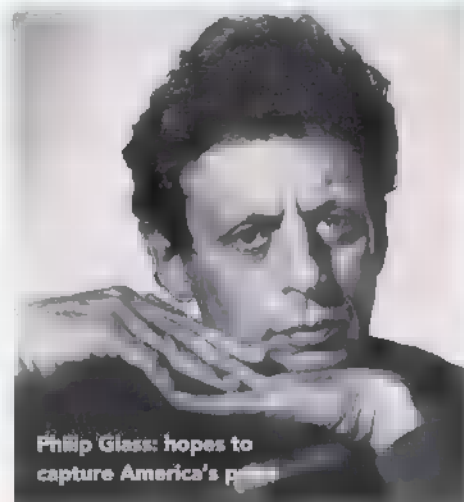


Charles Dutoit: making his mark up

## Glass to write opera about Disney

Philip Glass is to write *The Perfect American*, a new work exploring the life and career of Walt Disney. Commissioned by New York City Opera, it will be staged in collaboration with theatre group Improbable, which recently worked on a production of Glass's *Satyagraha*. Based on a novel by Peter Stephen Jungk, the work is set to open City Opera's 2012-13 season and will coincide with Glass's 75th birthday.

Jungk's novel imagines the final months of Walt Disney's life through the eyes of fictional Austrian cartoonist and former Disney employee Wilhelm Dantine. "The story of the last days of Walt Disney, American icon and creator of perhaps the most pervasive fantasy world on our planet, is surprisingly gripping and at times disturbing," said Glass. "But, on the face of it, how could it be anything else? The pulse of his life has to be the pulse of our own American culture. And, like other aspects of life here, it is unimaginable, alarming, and truly frightening."



Philip Glass: hopes to capture America's pulse

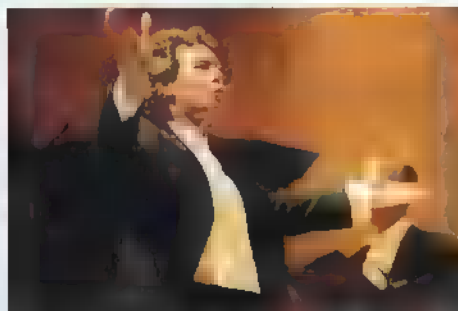


Twenty-five-year-old **David Afkham** from Germany has won the 2008 Donatella Flick Conducting Competition. Afkham, who was appointed chief conductor of the KHG Symphony Orchestra Freiburg in 2006 and guest assistant conductor of the Baden-Württemberg Youth Orchestra in 2007, will receive £15,000 to put towards specialist study, and will work as the London Symphony Orchestra's assistant conductor for a year.



MacArthur Foundation Fellowships have been awarded to New Yorker music critic Alex Ross and violinist **Leila Josefowicz**. The Foundation's aim is to support "creative people and effective institutions committed to building a more just, verdant and peaceful world" by giving an annual "Two strings attached" grant of \$500,000 to each of its fellows.





Boston-bound: Harry Christophers

## Harry Christophers takes over at Handel and Haydn Society

Boston's Handel and Haydn Society, America's oldest continuously performing arts organisation, has named Harry Christophers, founder and conductor of British choir The Sixteen, as its 13th artistic director, beginning with the 2009-10 season.

During his first season in the role Christophers will conduct five concerts in the main nine-programme subscription series, in addition to commercial recordings, tours and other concert activities. Discussions are underway to record Mozart's Mass in C minor.

As artistic director designate during the current season, Christophers will oversee artistic planning and programming. The initial term of his contract with the Society extends through the 2011-12 season.

## New director for Glimmerglass Opera

The search is over for Glimmerglass Opera's new music director following Stewart Robertson's departure in 2006. In November former Glyndebourne chorusmaster and staff conductor David Angus took up the role, assuming full responsibility for the Glimmerglass Opera Orchestra. He will conduct two of the American company's four operas each season, beginning in 2010.

"Stewart Robertson had served as Glimmerglass's music director for close to 20 years, and it was important we move forward with someone most suited for the Glimmerglass family," said general and artistic director Michael MacLeod. "With David Angus, Glimmerglass has gained not only a talented conductor but a wonderful colleague."

The 2008 Praemium Imperiale Awards were presented in Tokyo to outstanding leaders of the arts by the Emperor's younger brother Prince Hitachi. Alongside recipients in the fields of painting, sculpture, architecture and theatre/film was conductor **Zubin Mehta** for music. The awards, presided over by the Japan Art Association, this year mark their 20th anniversary.

GRAMOPHONE talks to...

## Pierre Boulez

Pierre Boulez on his new disc of Mozart's Gran Partita and Berg's Chamber Concerto

### How long have you known the Berg?

It's a work I've known since 1947 or '48. There wasn't even a score at that time, and you cannot imagine how poor the performances were at this period. Nobody had the education at this time in France about the Austrian tradition – Mahler wasn't performed at all. And if you don't know Mahler it's difficult to play Berg with the real stylistic approach. It was performed much too slow for a start, and without the right balance.

### But with the Mozart Serenade there is a French connection.

The music of the French Revolution was written mainly for winds and the Conservatoire in Paris was founded, after the Revolution, for the official ceremonies – and so it began with wind instruments. So a lot of the music from the time of the revolution was written for winds, though the level was certainly not the level of Mozart. So there is a tradition of woodwind music in France that goes back to the Revolution – and at the same time the choral tradition disappeared because the Church was sidelined. You gained on ■ side and lost on another.



### And the Serenade really is a work of pure magic...

The big *Adagio* is really extraordinary – a moment of genius. You have this introduction that is very slow with just a chord, an arpeggio – and you say that's nothing. But it's so wonderful, so mysterious that it has you thinking "what will happen?" It's like a magic ceremonial moment, like a ritual almost – you could almost imagine it in *The Magic Flute*, though it's much earlier. The three soloists – the first oboe, the first clarinet and the first basset-horn – are really like three singers, an ensemble that could fit in ■ opera. Variations you can find in the piano concertos but he has an inventiveness in these variations that is astonishing. When I think of the variations of Mozart and the variations of Berg I can ■ the same richness, the same proliferation of ideas.

■ Pierre Boulez's Berg and Mozart disc, released by Decca, ■ reviewed on page 99

## Shop talk

'I suspect the rumours may be coming from some of these artists'

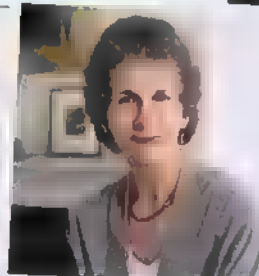
Wigmore Hall's John Gilhooly, quoted in *The Guardian*, blames ■ that he refuses ■ book anyone who appears at ■ newly opened Kings Place ■ musicians 'disenfranchised from Wigmore because ■ quality'

## Shop talk Best sellers

- 1 **R Strauss** Don Juan RCO / Jansons RCO Live
- 2 **Beethoven** Piano Sonatas, Vol 4 Paul Lewis Harmonia Mundi
- 3 **Brahms** Symphony No 1 ORR / Gardiner SDG
- 4 **'Songs My Mother Taught'** ■ Magdalena Kožená DG
- 5 **Bach** Cantatas, Vol 5 Gardiner SDG



The Royal Academy of Music has made two important appointments to its opera department. From January 2009 **Jane Glover** will become artistic director and Glenville Hargreaves head of Opera Studies for the Academy's specialist postgraduate opera course. Glover has been music director of Chicago's Music of the Baroque since 2002, and Hargreaves has been an Academy singing professor since 1997.







DECCA







## Gallery view *(Air violin)*

"Credit crunch hits UK theatres." Happily not. These are stills from *Sigh*, a new work by artist Sam Taylor-Wood. A large-scale, multi-screen installation, it features the BBC Concert Orchestra.

piece of music, manipulated from Anna Frutkin. "The absence of the instruments renders the sound oddly in a present," says the gallery. "Taylor-Wood shot each section of the orchestra in different takes and these

individual films will be projected onto multiple screens within the gallery space, playing with the viewer's perception of both the music and each section in 'the ambient' situation of various Taylor-Wood pieces.

have a long history of classical music film in intriguing ways, with *Sigh* with how what we hear relates to what we see. *Sigh* is at the White Cube, MoMA's Yard, London, until November 29.

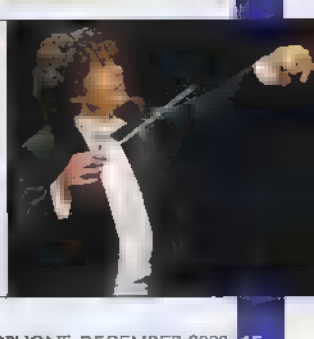


SAM TAYLOR-WOOD/COURTESY JAY JOPPING/WHITE CUBE GALLERY, SILVIA LELLI

Violinist **Nick Eanet**, co-concertmaster of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, will join the Juilliard Quartet as first violinist from July, and become a member of the Juilliard School's violin faculty from autumn 2009. Eanet replaces violinist Joel Smirnoff, who has quit the ensemble to become president of the Cleveland Institute of Music.



The Scottish Chamber Orchestra has appointed **Robin Ticciati**, 25, as its principal conductor from September 2009. The news comes after the conductor's appearances with the orchestra this summer in a three-concert Highlands tour. Ticciati will conduct four weeks of concerts during the 2009-10 season. Thereafter, he will join the orchestra for eight weeks in each season.





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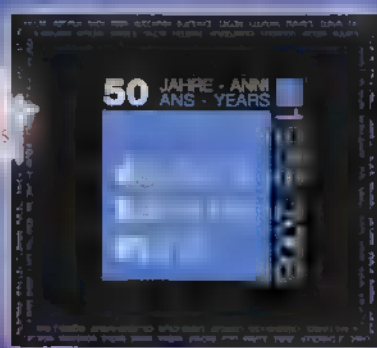
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## TAKING NOTE

Classical music in the world's media

*The Melbourne Age, Australia*

The majority of a \$1.75m (AUS) bequest from Melva Thompson to the former Victoria State Opera (now merged with Opera Australia) "has been squandered in a long-running legal action," reports Michael Shmith in the *Melbourne Age*.

"Supreme Court action over the money

involved the national company and two local companies, Melbourne City Opera and the Melbourne Opera Company, which was

formed after Thompson's death. The legal fight later included the Victorian Opera, which was not formed until 2006...Yesterday, OA's chief executive Adrian Collette said a proposal for OA to receive \$1m with the two other companies to split the remainder was rejected." To date the legal bill is "an alleged \$1.3m and rising".

[www.theage.com.au](http://www.theage.com.au)

*Yahoo!*

An Ohio judge offered to reduce a \$150 fine to \$35 if the defendant spent 20 hours listening to classical music, according to *Yahoo! News*. Andrew Vactor, 24, who was fined for playing rap music too loudly on his car stereo, accepted the challenge but lasted only about 15 minutes before deciding to pay the fine. The "idea was to force Vactor to listen to something he might not prefer, just as other people had no choice but to listen to his loud rap music".

[news.yahoo.com](http://news.yahoo.com)

*LA Times*

"Karita Mattila. Naked. Those three words have been on the mind of practically every New York opera fan for the last month as the Finnish soprano strips bare in the Metropolitan Opera's revival of *Salome*." But, says David Ng of the *LA Times*, when the production is broadcast live into cinemas, "those of us at the movies will see something, well, much more restrained". "You'll see the camera pan away from her," said a Met spokesman. "Either it will pan discreetly away to the audience, or it will do a close-up of her face." General director Peter Gelb has apparently decided the Met's HD broadcasts are to be "family-friendly" events.

[latimesblogs.latimes.com](http://latimesblogs.latimes.com)

London's Southbank Centre, which includes the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Purcell Room, has appointed **Alan Bishop** its new chief executive. Currently chief executive of the Central Office of Information, the UK Government's communications agency, Bishop is a former chairman of Saatchi & Saatchi International. He succeeds predecessor Michael Lynch in April next year.

GRAMOPHONE talks 1

## Sophie CASHELL

The Irish pianist on surviving a TV talent show, and her first CD

**You've come to prominence thanks to the UK television talent show *Classical Star*.**

**Was that a daunting experience?**

I guess so. During the filming itself we got used to the cameras and as a performer anyway you are used to going out and playing and that's always a huge pressure. So *Classical Star* didn't put us under any more pressure than we regularly put on ourselves. And they had very good cameramen who'd chat and put you at your ease, until we almost forgot that they were there.

**So one day you're an unknown student, the next you've won the show and with it a record contract. Was that a jolt?**

Actually, no. The show didn't air for a while so there wasn't any instant fuss after the final. I woke up the next morning still automatically thinking of things I needed to do better with my piece for the show, rather than thinking, "I've won! I'm amazing!" And I didn't go into Universal's offices until at least three weeks after the programme had aired. The idea was never to rush out a CD straight away. They are very keen to nurture me over a long period. Which is very good news for a young artist.



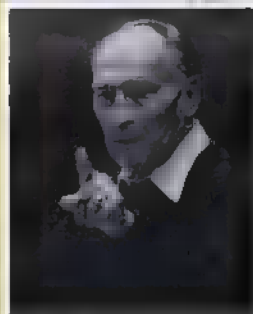
**How has the win gone down among your fellow students? Presumably they haven't been suddenly stealing your lunch money?**

Ha! No. I'm in the Royal Academy of Music and had been at the Menuhin School. I was already at the treadmill of trying to build a career. Some of my classmates were in the show as well, so there's no bad feeling about it.

**In the booklet for your first CD you thank Hamish Milne and Viktoria Mullova.**

They've both helped me. Hamish is my teacher, and Viktoria was at the recording and helped put me at my ease and gave me advice. I look up to them both. Though my favourite musician ever is Dinu Lipatti, a truly amazing pianist.

**Sophie Casshell's debut disc is out on UCL and reviewed on page 107**



**VIOLINIST GIL SHAHAM ON CONDUCTOR AND MUSICAL PATRON PAUL SACHER**

I worked with him only once – he came to New York to conduct the 92nd Street Y Chamber Orchestra, and I played Prokofiev's First Violin Concerto. He really was an excellent conductor – he had a confidence and charisma about him. During rehearsal there was a moment, some passage that we couldn't work out, and we were just going over and over it, and he turned to me and said: "But this is art, and art is always difficult". At the time I just thought it was striking, and I don't think I knew what he meant, but 20 years later I can

confirm he was right! The way he said it, it wasn't like "oh it's difficult", it was "I love art, it's always difficult, and that's why we need to fight for it". He had such an incredible perspective on the whole music world.



**MDC Music & Movies**, the classical music retailer whose shops include one based in London's Royal Festival Hall, will open an outlet in Foyles, the famous Charing Cross Road bookshop. It also promises a "commitment to live performances", already demonstrated by its soon-to-be neighbour on Foyles' (music-dedicated) third floor, Ray's Jazz.





# MY TOP 10

## CHRISTMAS WORKS

For some, Christmas music is carols by candlelight; for others it's festive jazz arrangements.

**CAROLINE GILL**, connoisseur of the Yuletide genre, picks her top list of seasonal scores

**1 A GREAT AND MIGHTY WONDER – MICHAEL PRÆTORIUS**  
Also known as *Es ist ein Ros'entsprungen*, Praetorius's 1609 harmonisation of this hymn tune is probably the best known version: the simplicity of this setting of the text is wonderfully judged and there have been some notable descants written over it. Richard Marlow's double descant written for the Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge, is a particularly beautiful example and considerably less soupy than Brahms's organ chorale prelude on the tune.

**2 TOMORROW SHALL BE MY DANCING DAY – JOHN RUTTER**  
For many, Christmas is Nine Lessons and Carols from King's – and David Willcocks's arrangement of this joyful piece is one of the highlights of the service.



**3 A CHRISTMAS ROUND – JOHN TAVENER**  
Greek Orthodox music may not be synonymous with traditional Christmas repertoire but this is a surprising gem of choral music: the effect of the upper parts buffeting each other is to make you hear the sound of Christmas church bells ringing.



**4 SHEPHERD'S PIPE CAROL – JOHN RUTTER**  
This one piece is a worthy representative in this list of all the unselfconsciously festive music for which there is not enough space. It epitomises all the film soundtracks, seasonal television incidental music, carol singer visitations and Christmas concerts you will experience from now until Christmas Eve: each making you feel a little more childishly excited than you would ever to admit to anyone.

**5 THE SUSSEX CAROL – PERCY GRAINGER**  
Left unfinished at the composer's death, it exists in many different guises. The wordless (but still unmistakably Christmas) choral arrangement by Dana Perna for Polyphony and Stephen Layton (right) is, for me, the best.



**6 A SPOTLESS ROSE – HOWELLS**  
This is a distinctively English piece that appears throughout the year in concerts and services: shoehorned into programmes by way of tenuous links to the season as an excuse to perform such a wonderful anthem. It is at Christmas, though, that I enjoy this the most – performed in the context for which it was written.

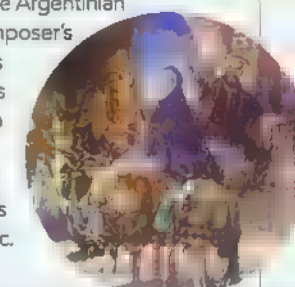
**7 BETHLEHEM DOWN – PETER WARLOCK**  
Written by Warlock and his friend, journalist Bruce Blunt, it's a surprise that two *bons viveurs* would have written something so serene – I feel sure they would have approved of the 2004 David Rees-Williams Trio jazz arrangement.



**8 KING HATH A GARDEN**  
There are so many carols so wonderful arrangements, all quintessentially "Christmas", that it is necessary to pick one to act as representative here for them all. Charles Wood's 1908 version of this hymn, made festive by its fifth verse "Yet, mid the brave, the bravest prize of all may claim / The Star of Bethlehem Jesus, bless'd be his Name", is a worthy example and to be found in *100 Carols for Choirs* – edited by Sir David Willcocks and the Christmas Bible for all carol singers.

**9 MAGNUM MYSTERIUM – LAURIDSEN**  
There is a handful of settings of this ancient text based on the responsorial chant that are true greats of the choral repertoire, but none of them, for me, captures the wonder and beauty of Christmas so perfectly as Lauridsen's deceptively simple version.

**10 LA PEREGRINACION – RAMIREZ**  
"The Pilgrimage", this is the Argentinian composer's setting of Felix Luna's poem about Joseph's and Mary's journey to Bethlehem and has been recorded by the cheerful King's Singers on their Christmas disc.



## CLASSIC ADS The Rubinstein Collection, November 1999

For serious collectors the 1990s were undoubtedly a golden era when it came to box-sets and special editions: Philips' Complete Mozart Edition and Great Pianists sets proved to be very popular, as did Sony Classical's Bernstein, Stravinsky and Glenn Gould

anthologies, to name but a few. RCA also dangled the proverbial carrot, boxing up ample wedge of Heifetz and Julian Bream recordings, and also compiled this staggering 94-disc Arthur Rubinstein Collection. Housed in an "individually numbered deluxe

collection box", the limited-edition set was a piece of furniture in itself and with 706 recordings spread over 106 hours' playing time it was certainly a collector's item par excellence. Now rare as hens' teeth, some investigation work may be needed to find one.

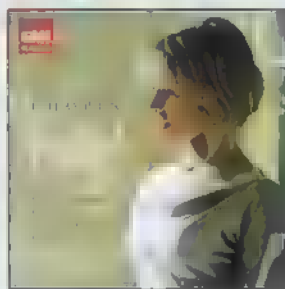




# Best of the year

## from EMI and Virgin Classics

### ■ Ingrid Fliter



Argentinean pianist Ingrid Fliter made her EMI Classics debut in 2008 with an elegant Chopin recital which included the Barcarolle Op. 60, Mazurkas

Op. 59 Nos. 1-3, Impromptu in C sharp minor, Op. posth. (first version of Fantaisie impromptu Op. 66), and Sonata No. 1 Op. 11 well as a selection of Waltzes and Preludes.

### ■ Simon Rattle



Sir Simon and the Berliner Philharmoniker have previously recorded Mahler's Symphonies Nos. 5 and 10; both discs received

outstanding critical acclaim. His latest recording of Mahler's Symphony No. 11 with the Berliner Philharmoniker was also met with universal praise.

### ■ Nigel Kennedy



Nigel Kennedy's first-ever Mozart recording with a fresh perspective on the Beethoven violin concerto

he first recorded in 1992. Kennedy says the main reason for re-approaching the Beethoven concerto is that today he hears the piece as having more rhythmic vitality.

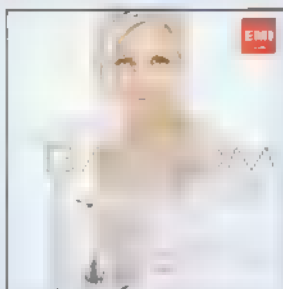
### ■ Natalie Dessay



Natalie Dessay and Juan Diego Flórez dazzled audiences at Covent Garden in Donizetti's comic masterpiece *La Fille du régiment* which in turn went on to be one of the best-selling opera DVD releases

of 2008. Also notable is the speaking-role of the Duchesse de Crackentorp by popular comedian Dawn French.

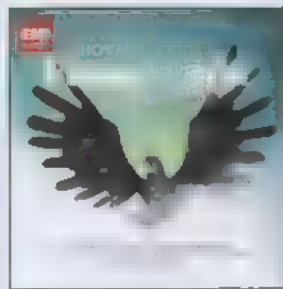
### ■ Alison Balsom



Alison Balsom's long awaited album of the Haydn and Hummel trumpet concertos, coupled with concertos by Johann

Baptist Georg Neruda and Giuseppe Torelli. The Haydn Trumpet Concerto is arguably the most popular work for the instrument.

### ■ Howard Goodall



*Eternal Light - A Requiem*, a fresh and unorthodox interpretation of the Requiem Mass by award-winning composer, acclaimed

broadcaster and Classic FM radio Composer-in-Residence, Howard Goodall. Performed by Christ Church Cathedral Choir, Oxford.

### ■ Evgeny Kissin



Continuing with its series of major concerto recordings with Evgeny Kissin, EMI Classics released the pianist's first ever complete cycle of Beethoven

Piano Concertos. Kissin is partnered in these recordings by one of the master Beethovenians of our time, Sir Colin Davis, leading the London Symphony Orchestra.

### ■ Joyce DiDonato



A gripping recital of Handel 'mad scenes' from Joyce DiDonato with Christophe Rousset and Les Talens Lyriques.

A highlight of the programme is Dejanira's climactic scene from *Hercules*. DiDonato's stage performance as Hercules' wife ■ the Barbican earned her ■ nomination for ■ Laurence Olivier Award.

### ■ Quatuor Ebène



The Quatuor Ebène's exciting and critically acclaimed debut recording on Virgin Classics brings together the

string quartets of Fauré, Debussy and Ravel. The Debussy and Ravel quartets represent ■ traditional pairing in the catalogue, but they have rarely been coupled with the Fauré.





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A conversation with...

# Einojuhani Rautavaara

Initially hailed as Sibelius's heir, the Finnish composer soon found his own voice, says Philip Clark

It's a cliché, but one that has endured – Einojuhani Rautavaara is Sibelius's heir apparent in Finnish music. One suspects that his ennoblement has more to do with his seniority than the fabric of his music itself (surely Magnus Lindberg's 1994 orchestral work *Aura* is Sibelius's "Eighth" Symphony?). Rautavaara's earliest works are couched in a Poulenc- or Milhaud-like neo-classical patois that, in the late 1950s, splintered into experiments with 12-tone writing. Then in the 1960s, his own voice filtered through: the works were neo-tonal but obviously of their era; serialism has left its legacy in Rautavaara's thinking but without a trace of dogmatic modernism. A large audience readily related to Rautavaara's sound world and vision. On October 9 Rautavaara celebrated his 80th birthday, but the years have taken their toll on his health. His prolific composition continues, but illness has affected his speech, so I interview him by e-mail.

Rautavaara's relationship with 12-tone composition is especially intriguing – how can a composer deploy serial techniques without the music sounding remotely post-Schoenbergian? "I wanted to deduce new methods from the too limited classic 12-tone technique," Rautavaara writes back. "My interest in serialism was inspired by the modernist music I heard in my youth, but I was disappointed with the melodic and harmonic poverty of atonal music. The string

quartet I wrote in 1958 is a strict 12-tone work, but my 1997 String Quintet follows the trail of its own melodic motifs and textures. It's a 'free' work, and freedom in composition is freedom to choose your own discipline."

Rautavaara was always keen to look beyond Finland. He studied in Vienna and Cologne, but the year he spent at the Juilliard School, New York,

In his old age,  
Sibelius was a mythical  
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ever saw him

is where he found his art. His main teacher was card-carrying neo-classicist Vincent Persichetti, but at Tanglewood he studied with the gnarlier Roger Sessions. "I was recommended for Juilliard by none other than Sibelius himself," he recalls. "In his old age, Sibelius was a mythical figure – you knew about him, but no one ever saw him. His recommendation was based on pieces of mine he'd heard on the radio – the First String Quartet, *A Requiem of Our Time* and *The Fiddlers* – and a letter from Sibelius's son-in-law, the conductor

Jussi Jalas, informed me I'd been accepted on a scholarship. I did later meet with him ■ thank him, but always in the company of others."

It's emblematic of Rautavaara's approach to composition that he has continued to pursue traditional forms – the symphony, concerto and sonata – while often personalising his pieces with evocative subtitles like *Angel of Light*, *Dances with the Winds* and *Gift of Dreams*. What does symphonic form mean to him in the early 21st century? "My Seventh and Eighth Symphonies are examples of what 'symphonic' means for me: long, almost endless continuums, logical and yet always surprising. A piece begins with ■ atmosphere in my mind, sometimes suggested by a phrase ■ a memory, and I keep playing with that idea until it develops into something musical. I then follow the tendencies of the music as it is being born. Musical material has ■ will of its own."

In celebration of his birthday, Finnish label Ondine has released a two-CD set of Rautavaara's complete music for male choir. His relationship with Ondine dates back two decades and has, he says, been central to his development. "It has been of utmost importance to have the Ondine recordings making my music known outside of Finland. A composer can only try to write good and interesting music, but he will need good performers, conductors and recordings to make his music part of the international repertoire." ■



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I am just in the process of finalising next year, a whole year of anniversaries: the 350th of Purcell's birth (1659), the 250th of Handel's death (1759), James MacMillan will be 50 on July 16 and something I never dreamt of – The Sixteen will be 30. The London debut was back in May 1979 and I remember Stephen Pettitt's review: "If the sound of the choir was a revelation, so was the music itself." One of the revelations was William Mundy's *Vox Patris Coelestis*, one of those long, ornate but stunningly beautiful works symbolic of the glories of Tudor music. Everything then seemed so simple; we had an almost cavalier attitude to performing. The music was hard – it still is – but there was a real feeling that we were all on a voyage of discovery which in many ways has turned into a crusade, a lifetime of championing great music.

The beauty of forming one's own ensemble is being able to programme music you love and I have in The Sixteen a group of vibrant musicians thrilling to conduct and quite wonderful to be with. However I can never be complacent; one has constantly to re-invent oneself. Boundaries have to be stretched, new audiences won and, through all that, musical standards upheld and our integrity continually preserved. Integrity is paramount. Our association with Classic FM, our discs with Universal Classics, our Classical Brit award in 2005 and the recent BBC Four *Sacred Music* series have all brought so much more into the public eye, but I have never allowed The Sixteen to be treated as a commodity. I feel so proud of what we have achieved. The Choral Pilgrimage which I began in 2000 has almost become a tradition – a "must hear" for thousands across the UK. This year we visited 20 cathedrals, abbeys and churches and 12,000 people came to hear us. It's such a simple idea – inspiring music in inspiring venues. However, since we are not a regularly funded organisation and thus reliant on philanthropic support, it is an incredible risk for us. People said we were mad to contemplate touring the



## DIARY

# Harry CHRISTOPHERS

**What do The Sixteen have in common with Purcell, Handel and James MacMillan? They all share an anniversary, writes the choir's founder and conductor**

UK, or to form our own record label, CORO. Well, we are still here, we are still smiling, and the Choral Pilgrimage and CORO are flourishing.

Thirty years ago, when we were mere fledglings attempting to tackle those extended antiphons from the Eton Choirbook, we had a small but loyal following. The audience tended to be cognoscenti; over the last decade I have noticed a significant change. The cognoscenti are still with us but there is an ever-increasing audience wanting to be introduced to this amazing music. The beautiful venues play a very important role, but undoubtedly our public wants to hear live the group they listen to in the comfort of their home, or while stationary in the M6. The music is both soothing and

challenging. People from all walks of life, ages and cultures come along to witness, as one eminent critic put it, "a tiny soundbite of heaven".

For our ninth Choral Pilgrimage we are touring not one programme but two (more madness!). It will be a staggering tour of 27 concerts from Canterbury to St Andrews via Swansea and Southwell. The Handel programme, which we are taking to six venues, including the Royal Naval Chapel, Greenwich, on the anniversary of Handel's death (April 14), is pure celebration. Central to it are his Coronation Anthems – that simple 22-bar introduction to *Zadok* is legendary. The other programme features Purcell and Scotland's outstanding musical genius, James MacMillan. They often say that Britten was the

It's such a simple idea  
– inspiring music in  
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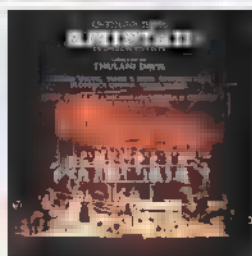
only British composer who could get anywhere near Purcell's brilliance and inventive writing for the English language. I think James can now lay claim to that mantle. I have pitted his *Child's Prayer* against the daring harmonies in Purcell's first set of *Funeral Sentences*. James wrote his work in memory of the horrific slaughter of primary school children in Dunblane. The hope he expresses from such a tragedy is at times overpowering and yet so tender.

As I write, our new recording of *Messiah* arrives – hot off the press. A plain blue cover, no fancy picture – it just is what it is. When I first recorded *Messiah* in 1986 for Hyperion Records, it was the biggest and most expensive project the late Ted Perry had hitherto undertaken. No change there – it has been the biggest and most expensive project CORO has undertaken. So why re-record it? One of the most satisfying aspects about The Sixteen is that I can safely say, hand on heart, that of all the wonderful singers who have played a part in its development, those who left to pursue solo careers have been successful. Mark Padmore and Christopher Purves were stalwarts in the 1980s, Carolyn Sampson in the 1990s – then add to this trio Catherine Wyn-Rogers – do I need a reason?

And so we begin our 30th anniversary season. It is going to be a year of celebration and what better way to kick it off than with our 150th performance of *Messiah* on December 3? Bored with *Messiah* – no way! ●



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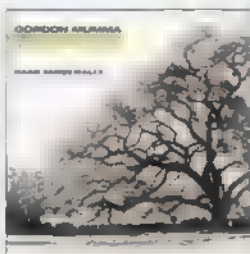
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## Lend an ear

Philip  
KENNICOTT

**How do you solve ■ problem like Szymanowski? Finding out could be a fruitful and highly enjoyable process**

I feel like Pittsburgh. That's how Arthur Rubinstein described the burden of too much practice: "A pianist isn't a steel factory, like Pittsburgh." I'm not a very good pianist, but I decided a few months ago to try to convert my listless and lazy fingers into something like fighting condition again, just to see if it's possible to crash through a few old warhorses.

Unfortunately, this ambition roughly coincided with a trip I made last summer to hear Karol Szymanowski's great opera, *King Roger*. It was a mediocre performance, led by one of our more ambitious but less dexterous conductors. Still, it was inspiring to rediscover the music. And to keep on discovering more and more Szymanowski. I've shaken all the Szymanowski trees in my collection, and out the fruits have fallen: the symphonies, the great *Stabat mater*, all the piano sonatas, string quartets and a song or two. I've also started playing a few of his piano works, which is a very dangerous thing for a critic to do. Going into the musical trenches makes you both more intensely critical and compassionate at the same time, which is to say, it's paralyzing.

I come away from Szymanowski's piano works amazed at the quantity of intellectual energy it takes to master (or almost master) his music. I've listened to as many different pianists's discs of Szymanowski as I can. Richter recorded a little, including some flinty and august accounts of the impressionistic *Métopes*. Rubinstein came back at least twice to the Mazurkas, Op 50, and some critics consider his readings definitive. I wonder if the old master wished his friend Szymanowski would just write a little bit more like Chopin.

Rubinstein wants more folksy fun, more cabbage and clog dancing in these dense studies than Szymanowski provides. When Rubinstein plays Szymanowski, you have the sense of a man on a train repeatedly trying to get comfortable only to be jostled, grunting and harrumphing, from his sleep. I've also enjoyed a few discs of Martin Roscoe's cycle of the piano works on Naxos. The price can't be beat, and Roscoe is ■ authoritative player. And Piotr Anderszewski's recording of the third Piano Sonata, the *Métopes* and the *Masques* on Virgin is technically stunning (the fugue at the end of the sonata is a thriller).



Who ■ Szymanowski?

There's more to be considered, but perhaps I've heard enough to wonder if Szymanowski is still a problem unsolved. As Johnson wrote of Addison, "he thinks justly, but he thinks faintly." I worry that poor Szymanowski falls into some similar damned-with-faint-praise category. He writes music passionately; but he composes haphazardly. Szymanowski drops

maddening oddities into otherwise quite regular pieces of music. The early piano preludes (which deserve to be played more often) remind ■ of some great, pathetic speech into which random nouns have been dropped just to try the patience and the memory: "To be or ■ to be, that is the Rabbit, whether it is nobler in the Dog Collar..." Sometimes the quirks in his writing are markers of distinction, and sometimes they're just bizarre.

**'Going into the musical trenches makes you both more intensely critical and compassionate'**



One of the most curious efforts to solve the problems of Szymanowski can be heard on a recording from 1952, made in Hollywood, with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Alfred Wallenstein conducting. The piece is the *Symphonie concertante* and, once again, Rubinstein is the pianist. Simon Rattle has also recorded this piece, and in Rattle's version, Szymanowski is heard as a determined modernist, volatile, explosive and rather hard-edged. But the LA Philharmonic didn't get the memo. They play it as if it's just another score from the film vaults, and the effects are fascinating. The strings pour syrup onto anything that even resembles a melody, and the pacing has the episodic and scattered quality of an orchestra sight-reading a difficult piece. Oh look, there goes a lovely passage...and then they scramble on to the next thing. The piece is radically transformed...into ■ soundtrack.

Yet another failed attempt to find the soul of a difficult composer? Perhaps. But this is where the fruitful work of new recording can be done. The 21st century may turn out to be no less chaotic than the 20th, which, with its wars and revolutions, was fairly hard ■ poor Szymanowski. But while some critics complain of the globalising effects of our new media, the loss of cultural boundaries, the flattening of musical style, all of that can be ■ profoundly positive thing in the service of some composers – the ones who don't fit into the easy boxes of style. Szymanowski's music is still undiscovered territory, and in many ways I think notions about his Polishness may have been ■ bad map for many interpreters. The weird Hollywood version of the *Symphonie concertante* was another bit of misdirection – but fruitful too. It is an experiment that doesn't work, but moves us forward nonetheless. He isn't that. But to know that is progress. And I hope pianists keep trying. ●



## Finding my place

# Armando IANNUCCI

It may be an impossible exercise to decide which recording is the 'best' – but it's still a worthwhile and enjoyable one



I've been lucky enough over the past few years to be invited on to various awards panels and flattered enough to accept. Sitting in judgement over a disparate group of other people's hard work is a peculiar experience; one begins to realise just how artificial the notion of order of merit becomes when you're trying to compare a biography of a 19th century admiral with a children's story about elephants, or when you're asked to quantify the difference between a 10-CD box of Haydn trios and a Vaughan Williams symphony. One might as well try comparing coffee with a wheelbarrow.

The music choice just mentioned was faced by those of us on the penultimate stage of the *Gramophone* Gold Disc Award, in which a group of us whittled down 10 of the past 30 years' Record of the Year winners to a set of five to be put before a public vote. Faced with the impossibility of using any scientifically objective method of comparing, say, a Grieg song recital with a Mahler symphony, you find yourself digging deep into intense, personal, unquantifiable consideration of how a performance hits you both intellectually and emotionally. One is forced to consider just what exactly the CD listening experience means, and how each of these pieces alters and magnifies it. As a result, I left feeling that, yes, it's impossible to come up with some definitive answer as to which is "best" of all time, but that the process of having the contest is still a worthwhile one because the identification and celebration of excellence surely has to have a universally beneficial effect.

The conclusion is a snapshot of where all the trends and pulls of that day's tastes ultimately

settle. It's fun and illuminating, but never definitive. It's a serious business, as long as one doesn't take it seriously.

Listening to Angela Hewitt playing Bach or Paul Lewis playing Beethoven, I'm reminded about how wary we should be about declaring anything to be "definitive". It used to be that Gould's Bach and Brendel's Beethoven were definitive, but as the seasons move on and new generations of pianists come through, we see these older musicians as distinctive rather than definitive: we celebrate the originality of their interpretation but no longer hear it as the last word on the matter. Our judgement is affected by what comes after. Massive orchestras and choruses accompanying Karl Richter's vision of Bach's religious masterpieces may have seemed at the time the



Stephen Hough: Gold Disc winner

last word on depicting heavenly paradise, but nowadays it can sound wallowing and muddy, like a choir of angels gathering round a watering hole.

So our judgement is affected by the shifting trade winds of the market and the newest trends in performance. But the reputation of a piece can also affect one's judgement of how well it was played. The absolutely definitive performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony may well have been given a thousand times already, but we're hardly likely to notice because of the supreme

**'Classical music can often appear as if it's sealed the deal on what is and is not definitive'**

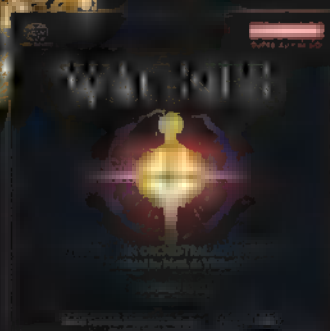
popularity of the piece. We know it so well that the performances that stand out now are more likely to be the ones with a more original twist; playing on period instruments, paring down the orchestra, taking an unusually fast pace. All of these approaches seem more notable because they refresh the piece; they startle us into thinking we're hearing the symphony as if for the very first time. Blowing away the cobwebs of convention, these performances feel like a recreation of the premiere. They're not, though: we can never tell what the perfect summation of the score can ever sound like. All we can do is attempt to understand it in many ways as we can. The recent trend for recording, say, Bach cantatas with one soloist to each choral part throws up interesting and invaluable insights into the structure of the music; as a result, the cantatas sound fresh. But that's not the same as saying they sound better. What they do, though, is profoundly impact on how we then judge more conventional performances.

Classical music, so often a medium that breathes in superlatives, casually discussing notions of excellence, sublimity, profundity and brilliance, can often appear as if it's sealed the deal on what is and is not definitive about a performance. And yet its history shows otherwise; the fact that conductors often re-record pieces, that performers like Kennedy can go back to career-defining works like the Elgar Violin Concerto and commit them to CD again because they've discovered fresh things to say about them, the fact even that composers conducting their own works can often sound strange and sometimes perverse, or that they're often compelled years later to go back and revise their works sometimes to the good, often not (there's a whole thesis in how much damage Bruckner did to his output this way) all tell us that the defining moment, though worth striving for, can never be reached and that to claim otherwise may be to remove music's final mystery. ●

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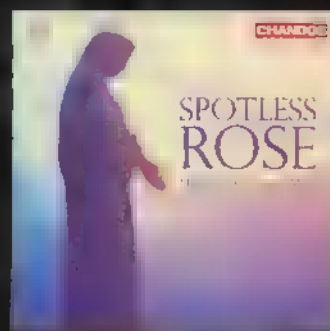
The Sun Times



CHSA 5058(2)

Leon Botstein directs his gargantuan forces supremely. Chandos's recording and presentation are exemplary (the latter includes some fascinating photographs and original programmes). Highly recommended.

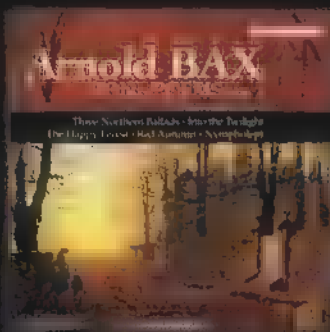
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The Sunday Telegraph



That strain again – where have we heard this before?

# Publicity by arrangement

Britpoppers Oasis promoted their latest album by handing out the sheet music first – an approach, says Mike Ashman, they share with Wagner and others

In 2008 composers remain aware of the need for special promotional skills to steal a march on the competition and bring their work (and theirs alone) into an audience's hearts and homes. At the end of September, the Gallagher brothers' band Oasis, survivors of the '90s Britpop wars, announced a plan for making some of the music of their latest CD "Dig Out Your Soul" available to the public for free before the album was released. Instead of imitating Radiohead's online offer of pay-what-you-want-to for a new album (which averaged

out at four quid), or simply giving the record away with a national newspaper (like Prince or Ray Davies), Oasis joined up with a new venture supported by the Arts Council to encourage young people to learn to read and play music. The band chose to give away a "Dig Out Your Soul" booklet and CD-R with the rock weekly *NME*. On offer was sheet music for three of the new songs, both in print and on-screen, various interviews and freebies, and a link to a dedicated YouTube site where you could post your own (as it were, pre-cover) versions of the tracks.

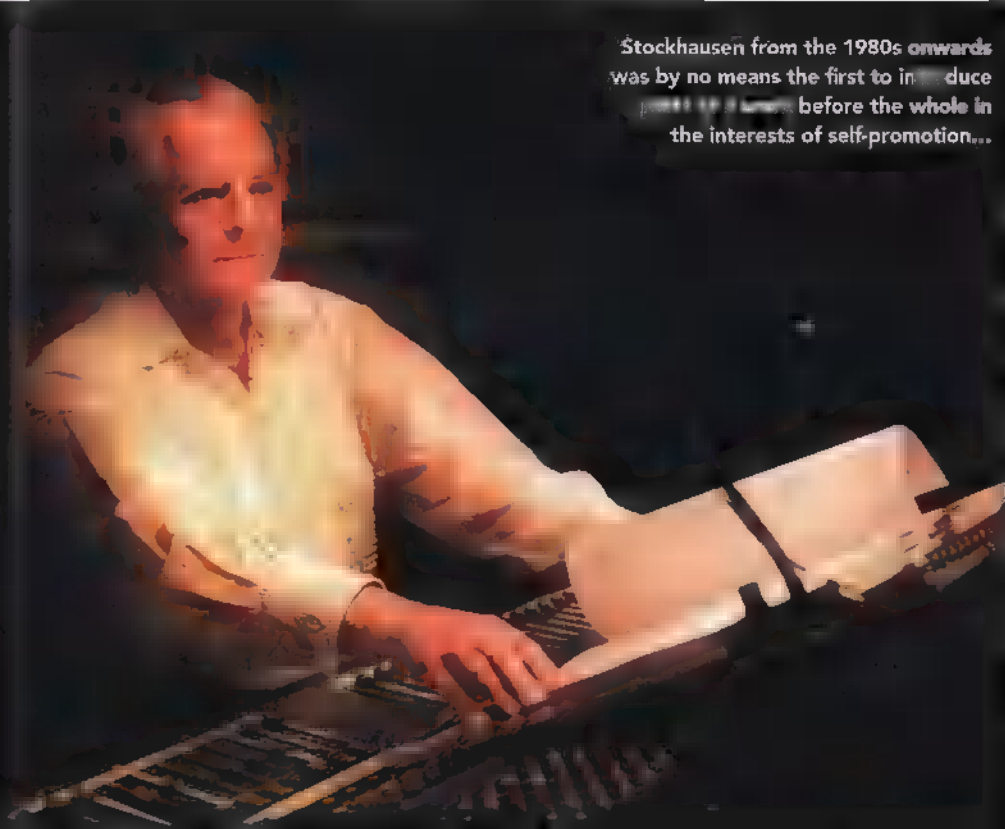
Since Homer smote his blooming lyre and told listeners that he was speaking with the voices of the gods on Olympus themselves in his tales of Troy and Odysseus's homecoming, composers and writers have always engaged in that extra bit of self-promotion. Medieval Minnesingers Wolfram von Eschenbach and Gottfried von Strassburg frequently interrupted their recitals with protestations of the originality or utter truthfulness of their versions of Parzival and Tristan. When, in the final supper scene of *Don Giovanni*, the onstage band play chartbusters of 1787 by Martín y Soler, Sarti and Mozart himself, Mozart and da Ponte were not merely having an in-joke (da Ponte had written the libretti of all three operas quoted) but indulging in a bit of onstage advertising.

Wagner and his Italian contemporaries had their own canny methods of self-promotion through musical arrangement. Of course, in the late 18th and throughout the 19th century the main way that listeners, managements and artists found out about new works, especially operas, was through publication of scores in part or whole, or from performance of reduced versions of the music. Potential audiences or buyers could recreate, or learn, the music for themselves: the piano, the universal instrument that could best imitate a host of others, found a home in many households of the middle-class, who were augmenting or even replacing the nobility as the new audience for art music. Richard Wagner, a continual and ingenious self-promoter, favoured both these methods of getting his new music known. Hack-working in Paris on hundreds of pages of arrangements of operas by Donizetti, Halévy and Auber in the late 1830s had taught him the value of music for home performance. In 1844, trying to make a deal with Breitkopf & Härtel to publish his new *Der fliegende Holländer*, he argued: "The reviews in the Berlin newspapers of my opera were confused and (I might almost say) baffled: they made me realise that, if the general public is to become more familiar with the somewhat idiosyncratic direction which I have taken with this opera, I must needs take steps to lay the music before their eyes."

Wagner also made "pre-cover" versions himself – attractively dramatic excerpts from the huge, unperformed (and, yet, unsponsored) *Ring*. In concerts throughout



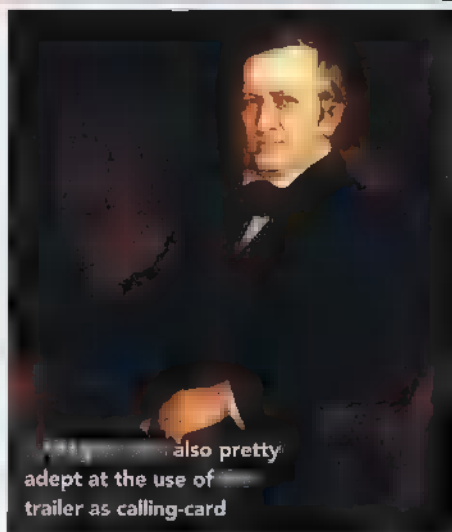
Oasis: hip, but not as adventurous as you think



Stockhausen from the 1980s onwards was by no means the first to introduce avant-garde music before the whole in the interests of self-promotion...

Europe and Russia in the 1860s he conducted so-called "bleeding chunks" like Wotan's Farewell and Magic Fire Music, or Siegfried's Forging Songs and Rhine Journey, in order to trail and finance the project. As composer, promoter and performer rolled into one, the ever-pragmatic Wagner was quite happy to lead his music with concert beginnings and endings mostly made by other hands (including, bizarrely, Brahms). He also seems to have been content to allow excerpts from the operas to travel as piano arrangements, or even versions, when sympathetic virtuosi known to him such as Liszt, Karl Klindworth and Hans von Bülow were involved. Cosima's Diaries, however, record him as being opposed to the practice of adapting another's music on both aesthetic and moral grounds, and railing against virtuosity, even that of colleagues, for its own sake.

By the end of the century (according to "Massive Reductions", a detailed 1992 article about this phenomenon by David Huckvale), publishers' shelves and piano stools were stuffed with Wagner arrangements and transcriptions of every degree of difficulty from the virtuoso – like the tricky, terrifyingly complete vocal part of Otto Singer – to the salon "pearls" or "paraphrases" playable by most basically competent amateurs. Included in this collection were the now almost defunct "piano



also pretty adept at the use of trailer as calling-card

scores", a reduction of the whole opera including vocal lines with text above the staves as well as stage directions and even instrumentation notes, a do-it-yourself one-player opera kit.

This was a new opera-a-season-or-you're-dead culture

The success that other versions of a score could make for the original composer is best measured by the effect of Schumann's lance-breaking review of Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*. Including plentiful comments on orchestration and instrumental colour, it virtually singlehandedly made the Frenchman a name, and secured him performances, in central Europe. But it was actually written after study of

Liszt's piano transcription of the work, not of the original.

John Rosselli's unputdownable *The Italian Opera Industry from Cimarosa to Verdi* (CUP: 1984) relates how in that country opera was often more than a matter of life or death to local and national pride. This was a new-opera-a-season-or-you're-dead culture, and Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, Verdi and now lesser-known contemporaries were busy beating or bucking a system (Verdi called it his "galley years") that made the pace of hitmaking on Tin Pan Alley seem leisurely.

Impresarios, agents, local dignitaries and leading singers jostled with the composer to promote new works via well-worn paths of brinkmanship and double-dealing that even had their own euphemistic language for business letters – uncannily like today's football with its tribal loyalties and transfer market.

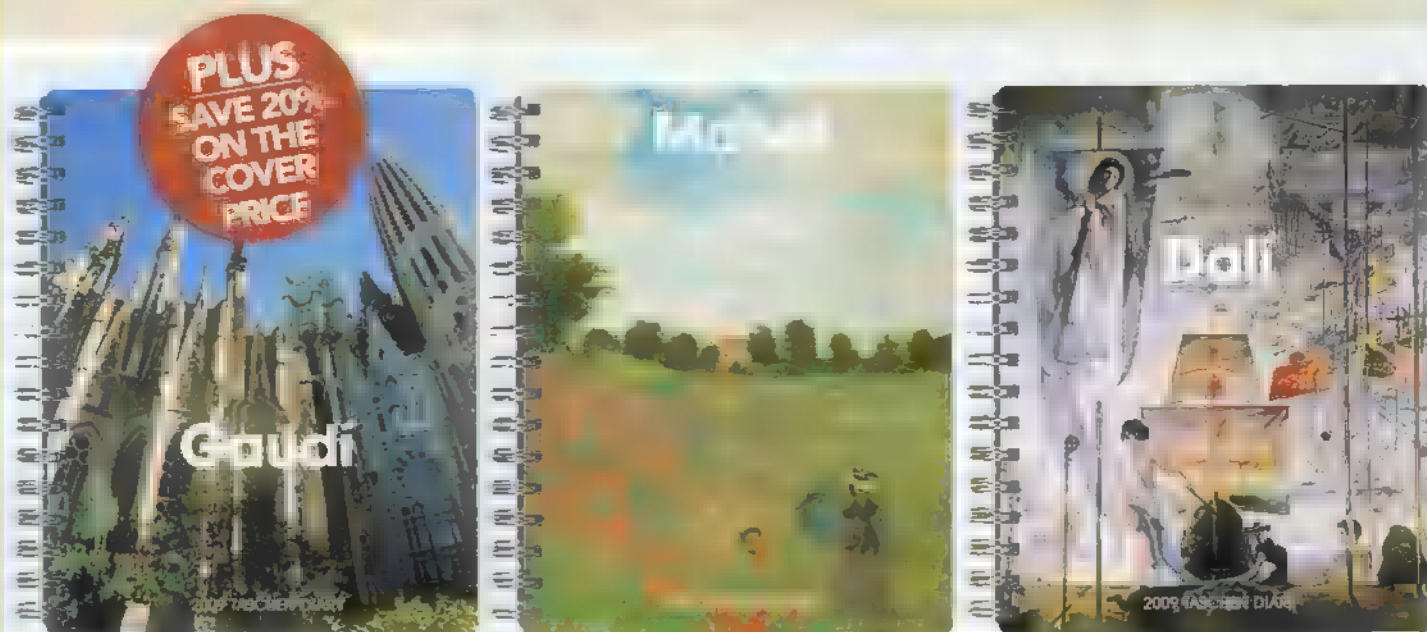
In Italy, opera reached out to extended audiences – Roger Parker calls it "the real history of how most people consumed opera most of the time – not in the theatre, but at home" – not just through play-it-yourself arrangements of musical excerpts but also through performances that were already more of a genuinely communal experience than in France or Germany. For example, the prominence of each town's (brass) *banda* meant that a musical number including them (normally offstage) was de rigueur in most Italian operas until the 1860s – even when, in *La traviata*, the dramatic *duo* called for a sadly ironical commentary on a young, dying woman. So townsfolk actually took part in the performance itself, and the music went back to the home, or the barracks, of these local amateurs for practice and became, literally, popular. There were hundreds of arrangements – those for *La traviata* alone (collated in a recent study) ran to hundreds by the end of the century, including one of the entire opera for solo flute – but they didn't so much make an opera famous as bask in its already-achieved fame.

In the early days of pop and rock it was common practice to tempt buyers to commit to purchasing LPs by filling them with already successful hit singles and songs from a band's stage act – a final product filled with trailers and constantly advertising itself in "live" performance. But perhaps the most extensive use of the trailer as calling-card to attract sponsorship and performance opportunities was made, from the 1980s on, by Karlheinz Stockhausen. His *Licht* cycle of seven operas – one for each day of the week – was assembled and largely first performed in individual parts: a prologue (*Gruss*) or an epilogue (*Abschied*) here, half an act there, using the rehearsal facilities and finance of concert halls, radio stations and festivals to work up to full stagings of the complete operas. So, what Oasis is doing may be hip, but it's not new. ●



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# DRESSING UP



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**ENCOUNTERS** Musicians on the moments that changed them



## With musicians in mind

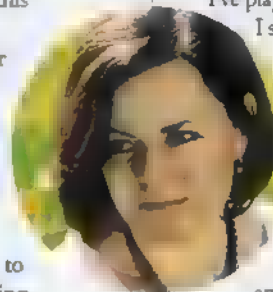
Pianist **KATHRYN STOTT** reflects on the fabulous affinity she's developed with composer **GRAHAM FITKIN**

I sometimes get called this "champion of contemporary music" which I don't really like, but I do have a healthy interest.

Until I met Graham I'd always enjoyed the contemporary pieces I played – well, most of them – but when I met Graham I found a composer that I felt a real affinity with. When he says he's going to write something, or we plan a commission, I feel this incredible sense of excitement waiting for the music to drop through the door. When he's writing for me, I know he understands me. If I think of Fauré, I think "yes, it speaks to me, it's something personal to me" – and I feel the same connection with Graham. It's just very exciting to have a living composer who has that effect. There's something consistent about the feeling I get from his works, and what happens to me when I play them. I open a piece of his music, and even if I'm feeling absolutely exhausted I just become totally energised. The thing with contemporary music is that it's all very well if someone writes a piece that's interesting to learn and may say something to the performer, but it's got to translate to the listener – and this is the other fantastic aspect about Graham's music. Without fail the audience have "got" every one of his pieces that I've been involved in.

Graham and I actually met by accident in 1997 – he was composer-in-residence for the Liverpool

Philharmonic. We met at stage door, ■ going in, one going out. I thought I should explore his music. As soon as I heard something by him I thought "wow – I have to get him to write something for me". It seemed a terribly scary thing to undertake. I'd never commissioned a work myself, with my own money. He delivered this fantastic piece – *Relent* – which I've played every year since.



I still get a thrill from playing it, and when the audiences leave they are excited!

The latest piece that he's written for me is called *Old Style*. It's a short piece, three minutes, and I can hear little bits of

French references there. I'm sure he writes with me in mind when he knows I'm going to perform it.

Generally with new pieces, performance opportunities don't come up very often. But with Graham's pieces I've been able to programme them easily – and other people take them up readily as well. I did a fantastic piece for saxophone and piano called *Gate*, and that has been taken up by so many saxophonists, and immediately went into the repertoire.

The other things about Graham's music is that it touches on modern-day music, if I can put it that way – it is in touch with modern-day life. ■

**Kathryn Stott celebrates her birthday with a concert – including a new work by Fitkin – on December 4 in Liverpool's Philharmonic Hall.**

# What am I?

Pit your wits against the Gramophone editorial team

**Who? What? When? or Where? In this month we give you a series of clues to help you solve a musical mystery.**

• Music was in my family from childhood; my father was a flautist. From early on I wanted to be a composer and indeed delivered a number of operettas. They were flops, even my beloved *Dr Ambrosius*.

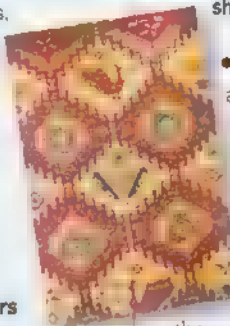
• So I became a music agent. I handled many of the leading artists of my day, not only singers but also actors and public speakers. Among my clients were Oscar Wilde and Adelina Patti.

• Eventually I moved into opera production. As well as some very famous clients, I commissioned works from Alfred Cellier and Edward Solomon. My influence on opera in England continues

to be felt around the world in the 21st century.

• It wasn't always a smooth ride, however. I fell out with my most successful writers over a carpet. I thought they should contribute to its upkeep, they begged to differ. There was quite a shouting match about it!

• In 1890 I came up with a master-plan to create a new golden age for British opera -- the operas, I reasoned, would run every night (with cast changes) rather than in repertory, so that a great following for the work in question could build up. I commissioned a great English composer to deliver the first work for this treatment, a subject previously used by Heinrich Marschner. But my grand idea didn't allow for the fact that the show could flop, which it duly did, to be replaced by a popular comedy.



Adelina Patti among our mystery person's clients



Heinrich Marschner: failed to deliver commercial

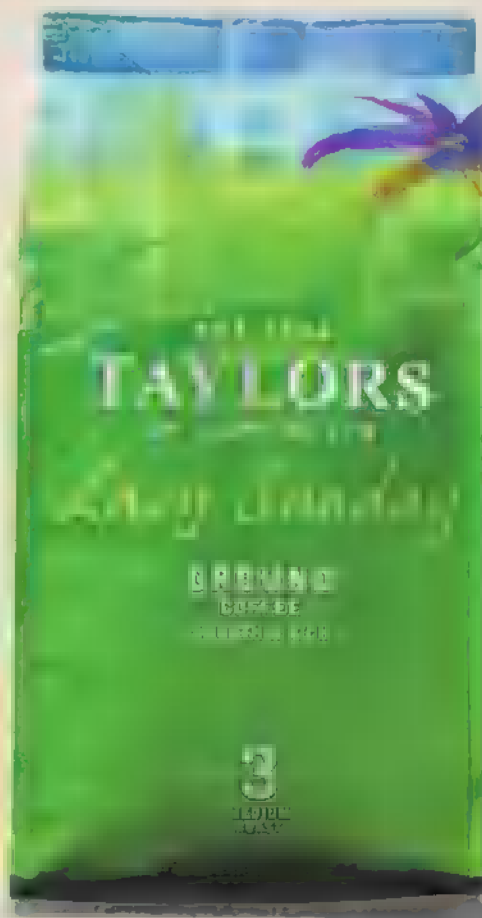
## HOW TO ENTER

Send your answer, stating that it is for the December Quiz, by e-mail to [gramophonequiz@haymarket.com](mailto:gramophonequiz@haymarket.com) or on a postcard to Gramophone Quiz, Gramophone, Teddington Studios, Broom Road, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 9BE, UK; please include your name, address and contact telephone number. The closing date is January 1.

The mystery work was *Morning Heroes* by Sir Arthur Bliss. The first correct answer drawn came from Roger Cleaves of Bristol, who wins a selection of CDs.

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*Arizona Daily Star*

## ONE TO WATCH

**Name** Pei-Sian and Pei-Jee Ng, 24  
**Plans** Pei-Jee performs at the Purcell Room, London, on January 5; Pei-Sian plays at Walton Hall, Warrington, on January 28. You can hear them play together at New York's Carnegie Hall on January 20. Visit their website for more details: [www.twincellists.com](http://www.twincellists.com)

# Pei-Jee & Pei-Sian Ng

**T**his is not just a gimmick—these two are both very much the real thing. Not only are they happy to play together, it's instinctive and down on the ground. Pei-Sian of course also plays in chamber works, and he is a member of the Artists Trust, and he is a member of the Purcell Room recital to the Purcell Room; and this autumn sees the Purcell Room welcome Pei-Sian to the Purcell Room. Pei-Sian to the Purcell Room. Webern and Mahler. Their

new album, released on the Purcell Room, neatly captures these two faces of their music, with individual sonatas, by a new work by two cellists, Australian and New Zealand, called *Two Faces of a New Work*. See review next month. Photographed at the Purcell Room, London.



# The world's greatest

The votes are in. Time to celebrate the best of the best

**I**t's a classical title showdown! Swapping gloves for glissandi and punches for prestos, players from around the globe square up for the hotly contested spot of World's Best Symphony Orchestra.

Ranking the heavy hitters is by no means an easy task, but *Gramophone* has manfully taken the job in hand. Our panel of leading music critics comprised: Rob Cowan, James Inverne, James Jolly (all from *Gramophone*, UK), Alex Ross (the *New Yorker*, US), Mark Swed (*Los Angeles Times*, US), Wilhelm Sinkovicz (*Die Presse*, Austria), Renaud Machart (*Le Monde*, France), Manuel Brug (*Die Welt*, Germany), Thiemo Wind (*De Telegraaf*, the Netherlands), Zhou Yingjuan (editor, *Gramophone* China) and Soyeon Nam (editor, *Gramophone* Korea).

To compare like with like, we have limited ourselves to comparing modern romantic orchestras rather than period bands, but apart from that distinction it's a completely open field. The panel have considered the question from all angles – judging concert performances as well as recording output, contributions to local and national communities and the ability to maintain iconic status in an increasingly competitive contemporary climate.

The results have proven fascinating and will no doubt be as controversial as the question itself. But if nothing else, the task gives us all a chance to celebrate the forerunners of exciting, cutting-edge music-making. And that can't be a bad thing...



THOMAS CRUTZINGER

## THE BEST OF THE REST...

We start our countdown from 20th to 11th place

### 20 Czech Philharmonic

Under current chief conductor Zdeněk Mácal, ■■■ of the most characterful of orchestras has embarked upon recording projects that include the complete symphonies of Dvořák, Mahler, Tchaikovsky and Brahms. Eliahu Inbal is to take over as chief conductor from ■■■.

### 19 Saito Kinen Orchestra

Formed by Seiji Ozawa in 1984 in honour of Hideo Saito (founder of the Toho Gakuen School of Music), this exciting orchestra is resident ensemble of the annual Saito Kinen Festival Matsumoto in the Japanese Alps, and has made a number of acclaimed recordings for Philips and Sony.

### 18 Metropolitan Opera Orchestra

Since Peter Gelb took over as its general manager ■■■ 2006, the Met has rarely been out of the spotlight. But the roster of crowd-pleasing opera stars ■■■ apt to eclipse the great work done by the orchestra. Under James Levine, the players have toured ■■■ concert since 1991 and each year perform ■■■ subscription series at Carnegie Hall.

### 17 Leipzig Gewandhaus

Boasting a roster of former music directors including Felix Mendelssohn and Wilhelm Furtwängler, the Gewandhaus orchestra has been presided over by Riccardo Chailly ■■■ 2005, and under his leadership has released recordings of Mendelssohn, Brahms and Schumann symphonies. They carry their sense of heritage ■■■ everything they play.

### 16 St Petersburg Philharmonic

Russia's oldest symphony orchestra celebrated ■■■ 125th anniversary in 2007. Under the direction of Yuri Temirkanov, who has been at the helm ■■■ 1988, this incredibly active orchestra toured Japan, Korea, Taiwan and China in October and November.

### 15 Russian National Orchestra

Since its founding in 1990 by music director Mikhail Pletnev, the orchestra has achieved considerable ■■■ consistent critical acclaim for its concerts and ■■■ than 60 recordings for DG and Pentatone. The RNO will launch its own annual festival in 2009.

# orchestras



Dresden Staatskapelle principal conductor **Luisi**: intoxicating, central European sound

**10 Dresden Staatskapelle**  
This is one of the very few orchestras with its own distinctive sound. By which I mean a sound that is,

perhaps more than with any other orchestra, immediately recognisable. This has to do with the orchestra's heritage, somewhat with the fact that it was isolated during the Cold War, and also with the players' devotion of this sound and their own wish to preserve it. And so the players pass on the knowledge of how to produce it to their pupils, who often succeed them in the orchestra.

I admit, my name is Nikolaj Znaider. I'm an addict. I'm addicted to this orchestra, and to the intoxicating, central European sound it produces today and that can be heard in those old recordings under Wilhelm Furtwängler from the 1940s and '50s. It's an orchestral sound that almost no longer exists elsewhere. It's hard to describe, because to do that one must become subjective, but I would aesthetically define it as a dark, wooden quality.

Less subjectively, the Dresden players play music the way I believe it should be played – with what is invariably called “a chamber-music quality”. That of course simply means actively listening to what goes on around you and relating what you hear to that. With certain orchestras, definitely this one, you sense that every musician takes responsibility not just for their own part but for the orchestra as a whole.

As I grow and develop, increasingly I have a need for that sense of creating something that does not yet exist – something that must be brought into the physical world from the metaphysical. To do that it's not enough to play my solo violin part; it is vital to play with a great conductor and a great orchestra, with people who have musical vision and share that need to express collectively something in the music.

So I play with the Staatskapelle whenever I can. Recently I have started sitting in the orchestra for a concert's second half. Last year we played Beethoven's dates in Dresden and each time after the interval I sat with them to play Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. To be in the midst of this group of people thinking and breathing as one, while still acting as individuals taking responsibility for their part in the whole, is the ideal. I can't imagine any list of the world's great orchestras without the Dresden Staatskapelle at or near the top.

**Nikolaj Znaider**

Violinist Nikolaj Znaider returns to conduct and play with the Staatskapelle in January 2009, for concerts marking Mendelssohn's 200th anniversary

## 14 Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra

Thanks to the vision of artistic director Valery Gergiev, the orchestra of the Mariinsky (formerly Kirov) in St Petersburg has gone from strength to strength, with recordings on Philips covering much of the core Russian ballet and opera repertoire.

## 13 San Francisco Symphony Orchestra

Under the precise direction of Michael Tilson Thomas, the San Francisco Symphony has developed a beautifully polished, often theatrical sound. The orchestra's recent SFS Media label, launched in 2001, has thus far focused on the lauded Mahler symphony set and orchestral song-cycles.

## 12 New York Philharmonic

The USA's oldest active orchestra is still going strong, and earlier this year, in an effort to form artistic ties with one of the world's most politically isolated nations, made history by performing in Pyongyang, North Korea. Young and dynamic conductor Alan Gilbert should ensure the orchestra's continued vibrancy when he takes over as music director in 2009.

## 11 Boston Symphony Orchestra

A classy and sophisticated orchestra, which each year provides the backbone for one of the world's best summer festivals – Tanglewood. Its recording of Peter Lieberson's *Neruda Songs* under current music director James Levine won the Grammy Award for Best Classical Vocal Recording.

## 9 Budapest Festival Orchestra

For an orchestra that is only celebrating its 25th birthday this year, the BFO has risen to the top with extraordinary speed.

But then it's an extraordinary set-up – a group of superb musicians who play with passion and commitment that beggars belief. The combination of Iván Fischer, the orchestra's founder and music director ever since, and these fine players has elevated music-making to a level that astonishes and delights with equal measure. This is not an ensemble in which the players fall into an easy routine – they know that their reputation relies on their continuing to deliver at white heat at every performance. Watching the BFO rehearse or record is like glimpsing chamber-music-making on a big scale, each player deeply concerned about his or her contribution to the whole. And in Fischer they have not a dominant ego, but a facilitator of remarkable sensitivity.

**James Jolly**

James Jolly is editor-in-chief of Gramophone



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# 8 Los Angeles Philharmonic

I tend to think of a great orchestra as either one that has such a distinctive sonic personality that it sets itself apart, or one that is defined as special by the repertoire it plays. With Los Angeles, it's probably the latter that you think about. In his years at the helm, Esa-Pekka Salonen has vastly broadened the range of what the orchestra plays. You can almost as likely to hear them play a work by Steven Stack as one by Beethoven.

So by now the LA Philharmonic is famous for its excursions into contemporary music. That gives them the ability to handle the technical demands of the repertoire in an important way. It also means that they're very open to new thoughts and ideas. So each conductor coming to that orchestra can place his or her individual stamp on the music, as opposed to a default interpretation that the orchestra provides. If, for instance, you go to conduct the Vienna Philharmonic in a Brahms symphony, it's more than likely that you'll get the Vienna Philharmonic performance of that Brahms symphony. It's not like that with LA.

Their new hall is also a vital factor in their success. You can't have a truly great orchestra unless you have a hall that gives you an environment in which to perform, either in the repertoire that you choose to play or through the kind of sound you produce. That hall may not be to everyone's taste, but in point of fact Disney Hall has given this orchestra a real chance to bloom. They can do things they couldn't do before because they were limited in terms of stage space – and they can do new things sonically because the hall is much more conducive to a wider sonic palette.

I expect Gustavo Dudamel's arrival as chief conductor to continue the good times, and his upbringing in Venezuela will help him. He'll probably introduce concepts he's grown up with, trying to make music ever more a part of the community. And he will help the orchestra make a connection with Los Angeles' large Hispanic population, a new audience that maybe hasn't yet been fully tapped out.

## Leonard Slatkin

Leonard Slatkin is principal guest conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra between 2005 and 2007.



# 7 Cleveland Orchestra

In refinement of tone, impeccable intonation, ensemble tautness and the sheer warmth of sound, the Cleveland Orchestra is the Concertgebouw and Vienna Philharmonic practically rolled into one. America's so-called European orchestra, it was made great by George Szell, an Old World autocrat, in the years following Second World War. No American-born music director before or after Szell moved to Cleveland. Most of the major commissions these days come from overseas. At the moment, Cleveland is a better place to find out what Oliver Knussen, Matthias Pintscher or the young Austrian Johannes Maria Stauder up to is New York.

But nothing, in fact, could be more American than Cleveland's orchestra. That it remains one of the world's best in an economically staggering Midwestern city is the American can-do spirit in operation. Franz Welser-Möst, who is in his fifth season as music director, has his detractors.

They call for a return to 20th-century predictability. Welser-Möst, instead, is moving Cleveland into the 21st century through his questing interpretations and inventive programmes. Nearly every week brings something current or a novelty from the past to the intimate Severance Hall. Though an Austrian, Welser-Möst has demonstrated a restless curiosity about American music, including the maverick tradition in the west, which is mostly ignored east of the Mississippi.

Even Welser-Möst's detractors usually admit that his orchestra continues regularly to produce its trademark sound that's hard not to love. The orchestra tours extensively and plays several seasons in Miami, helping out in Florida's orchestra-deficient capital. And Welser-Möst now has a contract running through to 2018, which allows him the luxury of making long-term plans, assuring a stability not to be found elsewhere in the orchestral world.

## Mark Swed

Mark Swed is chief music critic for the LA Times



The Los Angeles Philharmonic special by the repertoire



# MARIINSKY THEATRE

ST. PETERSBURG, RUSSIA

Artistic director Valery Gergiev

## FEBRUARY

International Film Brass Festival at the Mariinsky

February 11-13, 2009



## MARCH

International Festival at the Mariinsky

March 1-12, 2009



## FEBRUARY/MARCH

International Festival

February 23 - March 1, 2009

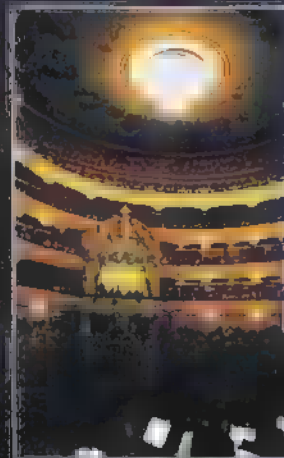


## MAY/JUNE/JULY

International Festival

"Stars of the World"

May 21 - July 12, 2009



### Further Information

[www.mariinsky.ru/en/](http://www.mariinsky.ru/en/)

[info@mariinsky.ru](mailto:info@mariinsky.ru)

+7 (812) 326-8141

## 6 Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra

Here is an orchestra that is not only very brilliant – it doesn't have any weaknesses at all. They are enormously spontaneous and emotional performers, playing every concert like it could be their last. They give everything, hundred per cent.

But the orchestra has a secret to its success. As an orchestra, all of its concerts are recorded. Therefore all the players are once accustomed to the idea that they must be technically perfect and unfazed by the presence of microphones – so, with the playing quality almost given, they also concentrate on interesting and involved interpretation. They are trained to do both, which yields enormous results. In addition, they play a lot of contemporary music. That keeps them sharp: their sight-reading, for instance, is phenomenal. For me, as a conductor, it's like driving a Rolls Royce. The orchestra can cope with everything.

**Mariss Jansons**

Mariss Jansons is chief conductor of the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra



Pierre Boulez conducting the Chicago Symphony whose players are 'adorable'



## 5 Chicago Symphony Orchestra

I have been playing with the Chicago Symphony for such a long time that I feel like a member of the family. When I performed with them for the first time I was 15 years old and they couldn't have been nicer – they are just adorable people. As a student I had often heard them at Carnegie Hall under Solti, so playing a Liszt concerto with him conducting was like a fantasy come true.

But I have to say that each time I play with them it's special. Last year I did a Brahms concerto under Haitink, and that was amazing. I am still at the point where I have a kind of thrill when I go on stage with a great orchestra, and they are incredibly talented, a very exciting group of players. I don't think I have ever heard more brilliant Strauss and Mahler than I have heard in Chicago.

As an orchestra they have a gleaming sound that I think they are justly famous for. Some people criticise them for failing to bring that incredible brilliance, but I believe they are an orchestra that responds to what you ask them for. When Solti was conducting them, he encouraged that brilliant sound, whereas when I led them under Barenboim they sounded like a fantastically rich and deep European orchestra, so I think they are capable of pretty much anything. Chicago, like all great orchestras, have a kind of pride in themselves, regardless of what is on the podium, and this is an important element in maintaining a high standard.

**Emanuel Ax**

Pianist Emanuel Ax will next play with the Chicago Symphony in April 2010





## 4 London Symphony Orchestra

The LSO stands out from all the orchestras I've worked with because of its totally unique work ethic. The players are always "on", whether it's 9am or 9pm, whether they've been working flat-out all day or whether they've just come back from their holiday. You start work and they'll immediately light up in a way I've never seen anywhere else.

The LSO style is well known – there's snappiness and vitality, a precision and a drive, and they give their all, especially when it comes to volume. Where does it come from? Well, they certainly have extraordinary versatility: they can play anything! But there's an attitude that goes with that – they have the

same openness to every project that comes their way. They have the vocabulary to be true to every style of sound that's required. They're constantly adapting.

They also benefit from great management, people who share with the musicians a curiosity about new things, and don't shy away from new challenges. And as the players are involved in many of the decision-making processes, they choose to work with people who share their philosophy. They're scrappers too – they're putting things together and the range of music-making they tackle is colossal! You always get the sense that they're there because they want to be – there's never any sense of grind. And that contributes to the immediacy of the experience.

**Marin Alsop**

*Marin Alsop regularly guest-conducts the LSO*

## 3 Vienna Philharmonic

It must be admitted that the Vienna Philharmonic, for all its deserved fame, does not always sound like the best orchestra in the world. It plays too many concerts, for one thing, and too many of those are with conductors unable or unwilling to bring the best out of the players. Sometimes, as when Valery Gergiev comes to visit, they can even sound brutal, like a second-rate symphony band. Sometimes the playing sounds boring, as long as it's as good as Daniel Harding address the orchestra's possibilities without any apparent artistic concept.

But – and it's a very big but – when the right conductor is before those players, it is a different matter entirely. When cultivated and inspiring interpreters



## 2 Berlin Philharmonic

Contrary to popular mythology, I don't think there is any such thing as a recognisable orchestral sound. However, you can recognise an orchestra by its way of playing. I have surprised myself on a number of occasions, turning on the radio in the car or in the kitchen, hearing an orchestra mid-flight and immediately knowing that it's us. It has to do with the priorities of the players – we Berlin Phil musicians play passionately and emotionally, throwing ourselves gung-ho into the music – and that is evident even across the airwaves.

I have been a member of the orchestra for 23 years under three music directors (Herbert von Karajan, Claudio Abbado and Simon Rattle), and during that time we have changed and developed. Indeed, it would be a sad case if we had failed to do so. I think any institution that wears its traditions proudly its chest must necessarily be aware that tradition is a living process. A performing tradition is not to be mummified, like a fly in a piece of amber or an exhibit behind glass in a museum, but instead is something that lives. By definition, it must evolve and adapt.

One of the principal points we addressed when considering where to take the orchestra after Abbado was whether we should move forward into the 21st century, or back into the past. Abbado had already done the pioneering work. When he took on the job after Karajan he was stepping into immensely big shoes, but he managed to achieve a pretty radical revolution, which influenced orchestras throughout the world. He presented a fairly traditional programme in a certain way, causing the audience to sit up, take notice and really clear out their ears. And within a fairly short period of time other orchestras were attempting similar daring programmes, too – as if they had simply been waiting for someone to take the lead. Now that we have Simon Rattle, who can perform a greater number of contemporary works. Many musicians around the world haven't quite come to terms even with the 20th century yet, but Simon is a conductor for the 21st century.

As a musician, if I had been reduced to playing nothing but Brahms and Beethoven – magnificent works they are – that would be a very thin diet. I have enjoyed the journey and pleasure with this orchestra immensely because my musical education has benefited consistently year on year by pushing the envelope. It's a tremendously rewarding and uplifting working environment – not the kind of high-pressure situation where you worry every day whether you will be good enough. I certainly don't feel there is a Damoclean sword over my head, but it's none the less a challenging environment. In meeting these challenges we orchestral musicians experience greater satisfaction and are able to raise the bar again – but it does require total commitment from every single player.

**Fergus McWilliam**

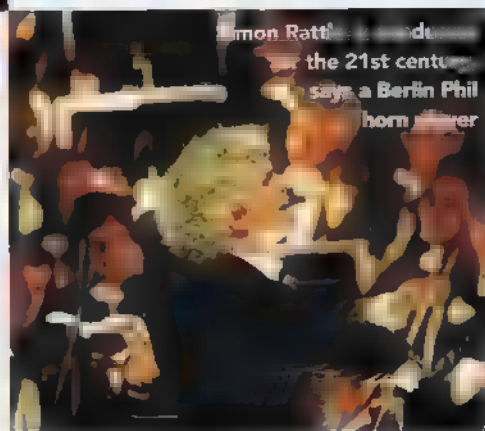
Fergus McWilliam is a horn player for the Berlin Philharmonic

such as Christian Thielemann, Franz Welser-Möst or the fabulous Bertrand de Billy (in opera as well as in concert) work with a sense of its deep well of musicality, the Vienna Philharmonic can sound like no other orchestra.

As it benefits from its daily activities in the opera house, the orchestra is able to form the smoothest transitions, the finest modulations of sound. That makes it incomparable, at least from time to time – whenever it exercises its option to be.

**Wilhelm Sinkovitz**

Wilhelm Sinkovitz is the classical music critic for Die Presse



MARK HARRISON, MUNICH PHILHARMONIC

## UP-AND-COMING

### São Paulo State Symphony Orchestra

The orchestra performs more than 130 concerts each season, bringing around 60 guest musicians of the calibre of Kurt Masur, Krzysztof Penderecki, Emmanuel Pahud. Directed by John Neschling since 1997, the orchestra has undergone something of a transformation in the last 10 years – under his leadership its subscription series, educational programmes have flourished, as has a fruitful recording partnership with BIS.

### China Philharmonic Orchestra

In some ways, the China Philharmonic is something of a baby, in others, a wise old sage – it was established only in May 2000, but from the ashes of the old China Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra. Its artistic director, Long Yu, is one of the country's foremost conductors and a very fine technician who arguably brought new standards of orchestral playing to China. As the country's interest in classical music surges, so does the China Phil.

### Royal Liverpool Philharmonic

When Vasily Petrenko became the principal conductor in 2006, he was the youngest person to hold the position in its 165-year history. With his appointment, the ensemble with its distinguished pedigree of principal conductors – including Sir Charles Hallé, Sir Henry Wood, Sir Malcolm Sargent – cemented its commitment to promoting classical music as a valid art form for contemporary audiences.

## PAST GLORIES

### NBC Symphony

A vehicle for Arturo Toscanini, the NBC radio network's orchestra was established in 1937 by recruiting prominent musicians from around the country. Its weekly concert broadcasts, which continued until 1954, were supplemented by tours of South America in 1940 and the USA in 1950. A comprehensive legacy – on both CD and DVD – is available from RCA. Many of the orchestra's members went on to form Symphony of the Air under Leopold Stokowski.

### Philadelphia Orchestra

Stokowski also succeeded in propelling the Philadelphia Orchestra to international eminence as its principal conductor from 1912 to 1938. But it was under the orchestra's first principal, Eugene Ormandy, that many of its most celebrated recordings were made. Ormandy remained as music director for 44 years, and in a diplomatic role he conducted the orchestra in Beijing in 1973 – the first time an American orchestra had toured China.

### Orchestra de la Suisse Romande

Under its founder Ernest Ansermet, this orchestra achieved special prominence for almost 50 years. After the Second World War it achieved particular success through a long-term association with Decca, issuing a number of memorable recordings, including much 20th-century repertoire. During the '60s, in his final years at the orchestra's helm, Ansermet concentrated on recording the symphonies of Beethoven and Brahms.



# Like a Concertgebouw

Of course I knew the Royal Concertgebouw from records long before I ever conducted the symphonic recordings – and later those with Bernard Haitink. On this score, before the musicians, I always felt that their approach to music-making goes far beyond technical questions. It is so profound, so intelligent, that it creates with you a unique atmosphere, they make you feel that you have entered a new world.

They have an understanding of a composer like an actor understands his roles – they interpret, they shift into the appropriate character. It is a hunger to comprehend what is behind the notes, the signs, and if you only follow the signs they won't get you there. Yet very few orchestras in the world have that quality of depth and the character of the music. We have many technically perfect orchestras these days. But this musical intelligence, this orchestra's very personal sound, makes the Concertgebouw stand out.

In rehearsals the players talk with you on a fascinating level about interpretation. So often rehearsals are simply about organisation: you are expected to come in and there is a little "here, here, here," which is very primitive. The players expect something extra from you, an interesting interpretation, illuminating ideas, a fantasy. If you offer them that, they play with a passion as though for a new piece rather than a work they have played a million times before. This is what the players want – that higher level, where you forget about the notes and play the image, the feeling.

All the truly great conductors boast an individual sound, which is not just a matter of style. When I took over the Concertgebouw, I was asked what I would do. I said, "For the moment, it's my task to preserve their special qualities and preserve them. Then, if through a natural process my own individuality comes something – and I hope to me – that will be fine. I would never set out to change the Concertgebouw. We continue to learn together."

Mariss Jansons

Mariss Jansons is  
conductor of the  
Royal Concertgebouw



## FIVE OUT OF FIVE

Gramophone's Best  
a Gramophone's top five

**Royal Concertgebouw Orch / Mariss J**  
R Strauss An Alpine Symphony, Don Juan  
RCO Live RCO08006 (A/08)

Elegant and beautiful, continuing to play from the  
great ensemble; this is a journey that shows  
Jansons's unrivalled ear for orchestral colour

**BPO / Simon Rattle**  
Mahler 2 deutsches Requiem  
2 (5/07)

A recording in great British tradition,  
recognisably BPO, and also very Simon Rattle!

**Decca / Georges Prêtre**  
New Concert 2008  
Decca 478 0034

The orchestra plays this music like the  
shows it such respect. This year Prêtre brought a  
little something new to the table

**LSO / Valery Gergiev**  
Mahler Symphony No 6  
LSO Live LSO0661 (6/08)

The LSO is a new LSO  
performance and a vivid picture of the orchestra  
that always gives 100 per cent

**Chicago / Bernard Haitink**  
Shostakovich

CSOR901 814 (11/08)  
Chicago orchestra responds to Haitink  
commitment and power





# MUSIC and the MIND

Nigel Hawkes investigates the profound effect music has on our brains – how it works, what we know and why music is ‘like a mind-altering drug’

**M**usic, neurologists have found, has a lot in common with food, sex and drugs of abuse. And not simply rock music: any melody, harmony, or thrilling top C that sends a shiver down the spine is eliciting a response in the same brain regions that are involved in emotion, arousal and reward.

The latest brain-imaging technology, positron emission tomography (PET scanning), was used by scientists at McGill University in Montreal to explore the euphoric moment when a piece of music breaks through mere appreciation and stirs the very soul. Given the intensity of the experience, it is no surprise that they found that quite primitive parts of the brain, such as the amygdala, were activated. They played Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 3 in D minor and Barber's *Adagio for Strings*, among other pieces, to music students, choosing 90-second extracts selected by the students as reliable triggers of the “shiver down the spine” or “hair standing up on the neck” experience familiar to all of us. Some people call this experience “chills”.

Anne Blood and Robert Zatorre, the two neurologists responsible, had earlier investigated the brain regions activated by musical dissonance. While dissonance triggered responses in the parahippocampus – the seat of negative emotions – music that generated chills activated regions linked to reward and motivation, such as the ventral striatum, the dorsomedial midbrain, the amygdala and the hippocampus, the same systems triggered by food, sex, and drugs.

“This is quite remarkable, because music is neither strictly necessary for biological survival or reproduction, nor is it a pharmacological substance,” they concluded. “The ability of music to induce such intense pleasure suggests that, although it may not be imperative to the survival of the human species, it may indeed be of significant benefit to our mental and physical well-being.”

## THE MYSTERIES OF THE BRAIN, MUSIC AND THE SENSES

The function of music has long puzzled scientists, especially those interested in human evolution. It appears to be ancient, and universal: bone flutes dating to at least 30,000 years ago have been found, though nobody has the least idea what tunes they played, and music is enjoyed in every culture. Some scientists believe that an appreciation of music is imprinted into the brain, rather like

the ability to master language. Yet music, unlike speech, sex or food, seems to offer no survival advantage. So why is it ■ powerful and so ubiquitous?

There is no final answer, but many other mysteries of musical perception are beginning to yield to the power of modern brain scans. Before magnetic resonance imaging and PET scans, tantalising scraps of knowledge had been gathered from people unlucky enough to suffer brain damage or a stroke, which affected ■ aspect of their musical appreciation. The Russian composer Vissarion Shebalin suffered a stroke in 1953 which robbed him of the power of language. He could neither talk nor understand speech, yet he went on composing music until his death 10 years later.

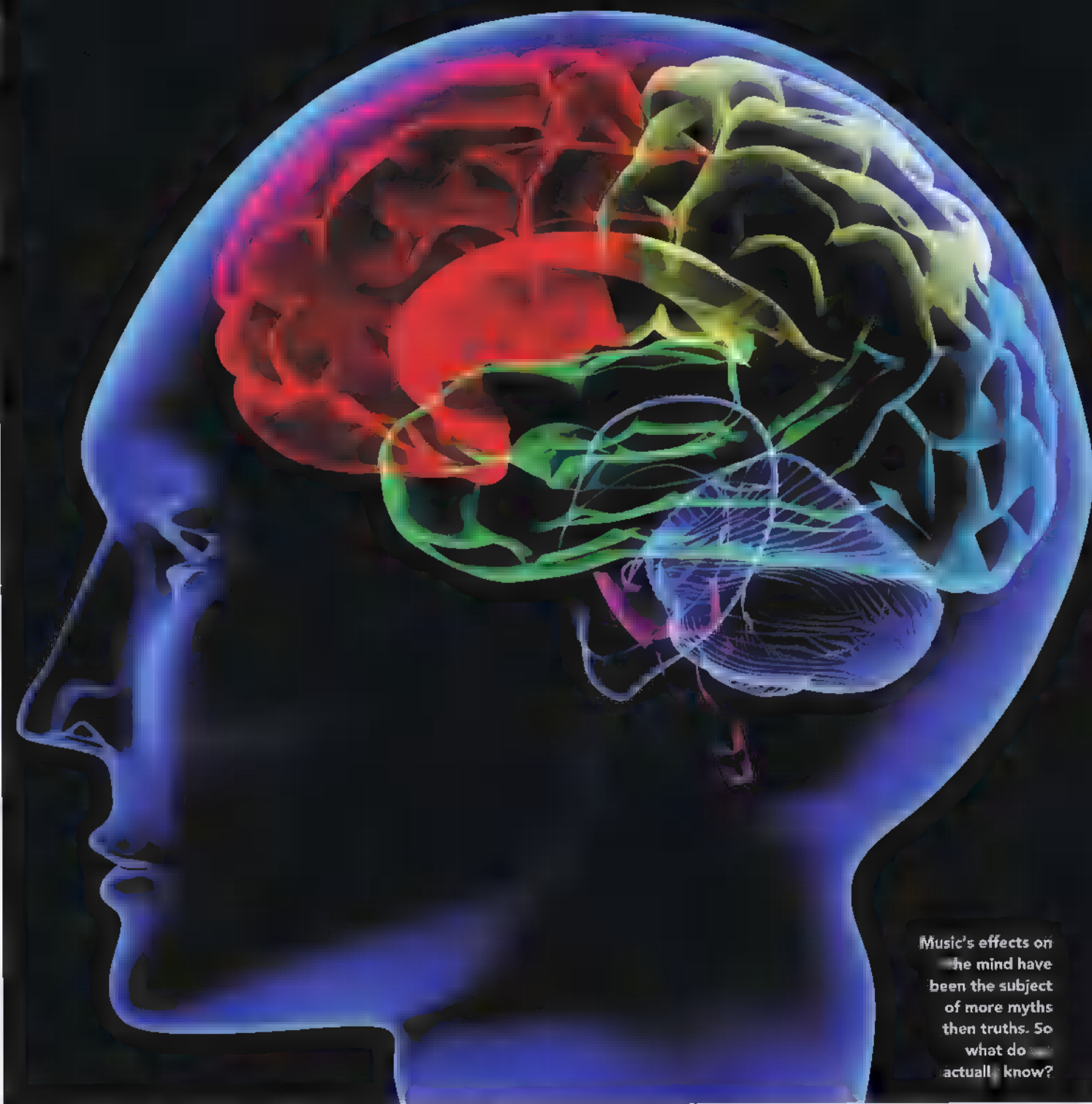
This makes it clear that while music occupies areas of the brain that overlap those of speech, they are not identical. Brain scans have confirmed this and

Brain scans have shown that there is no single area of the brain labelled ‘music’

have shown that there is no single area of the brain labelled “music”. Rather, in musical appreciation diverse areas of the brain are called upon: the auditory cortex for tones, the right temporal lobe for timbre, the parietal lobe for rhythm, the planum temporale for pitch and melody, the limbic system for emotion. Few of us know where any of these brain regions actually are, but that doesn't matter: where music is concerned, the brain is like one of those old phrenologist's skulls, each area labelled with a different aspect of musical appreciation.

All this becomes plainer when the brains of musicians are examined. Like the muscles of an athlete, specific brain regions ■ larger or better-developed in people who have spent years in music training. The auditory cortex is 130 per cent larger in musicians, for example, demonstrating that learning music increases the number of brain cells used to process it. In violinists, the brain regions that receive inputs from the fingers of the left hand are significantly larger, because those fingers determine the sound the instrument makes. There is ■ corresponding increase in the areas devoted to the right hand, which merely holds the bow. Keyboard players, who need to learn perfect coordination of the hands, show exaggerated growth in the anterior corpus callosum, the band of fibres that connects the motor areas responsible for each hand. The earlier children start to learn music, the more pronounced the changes. Children's brains are more plastic than adults' and respond more readily to the effects of musical training.

The diversity of brain regions involved in music means that there are many things that can go wrong in those unlucky enough to lack one or another of them. Che Guevara, the Cuban revolutionary, could not distinguish one tune



Music's effects on the mind have been the subject of more myths than truths. So what do we actually know?

from another, a serious handicap in an island so steeped in music. He probably suffered from congenital amusia, a condition that robs people of any shred of musical appreciation.

The average person, points out Daniel Levitin in his book *This is Your Brain on Music* (Atlantic Books, £17.99) can easily distinguish changes in pitch of half a semitone. But congenital amusics can barely perceive a leap of an octave, equivalent to the first two notes of "Somewhere over the rainbow" (I bet you mentally rehearsed that song as you read the title, and in doing so, activated exactly the same brain regions as you would if Judy Garland trilled it out).

Because there are so many music centres in the brain, there is plenty of varieties of amusia. Dr Jason Warren, a consultant at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery in Queen Square, London, identifies

failures to identify pitch and melody (dysmelodia), rhythm (dysrhythmia) or timbre (dystimbria). One patient with damage to the left amygdala no longer experienced chills when listening to Rachmaninov preludes.

And a woman simply identified as IR by the scientist Norman Weinberger of the University of California at Irvine suffered damage to both her temporal lobes, including the parts of the brain that are the first stage in hearing anything. She cannot make sense of any music, or distinguish between any two melodies, no matter how different they are. But she still responds emotionally to music. She cannot comprehend it, but she can still experience it.

Some people respond to music in a peculiar way that illustrates how it makes use of many different areas of the brain. For those who are affected by synaesthesia, musical keys trigger the sensation of particular colours, or



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even tastes. Composer Michael Torke, when just five, told his music teacher: "I love that blue piece." His teacher, uncertain she had heard him properly, responded: "Blue?"

Yes, said Torke, "the piece in D major... D major is blue". Like most synaesthetes, he was surprised that other people did not also see colours linked to musical keys. To such people, it is the natural thing in the world, without which they would feel their senses deprived. While colour is the most common to be linked with music, researchers in Zürich investigated a professional musician who both colours and tastes linked to particular musical intervals. While a minor third is salty, a major third is sweet. A fourth smells of mown grass and a minor sixth of cream, she said.

If music has such potent and varied effects on the brain, it ought to be marketed as a mind-altering drug. It already is, without our realising it. The quiet rows of Schubert-lovers at the Wigmore Hall are mainlining on a drug of addiction. When did you ever see so many people of advancing years with never a cough between them? And among the young, the iPod generation carries its opiate of choice wherever it goes, blocking the world while sucking in a mind-altering stream of song.

## THE MUSIC AND MENTAL CONNECTION

More seriously, there have been plenty of claims of music's ability to improve the human brain. Here, though, we are treading on shifting ground. The evidence is equivocal, and something that almost everybody believes to be true – that listening to Mozart can raise the IQ of infants – almost certainly isn't.

But to take the positive first, there is certainly persuasive evidence that learning music improves memory and the ability to learn other things. Canadian scientists compared a group of children aged between four and six who were given music lessons with a similar group who were not. They found that the children who learnt music showed changes in brain responses and performed better in memory tests than the others. Laurel Trainor, who led the research, said: "It suggests that musical training is having an effect on how the brain gets wired for general cognitive functioning related to memory and attention."

A study in Finland found similar effects in people who had suffered strokes. They were played either music of their own choice, audio books or nothing at all. Three months after their stroke, Teppo Sarkamo and colleagues reported in *Brain*, those patients who had listened to music had shown a 60 per cent improvement in verbal memory, while those who listened to books showed only an 18 per cent increase. Those left in silence were 29 per cent better.

Mr Sarkamo reckons that stroke patients spend long hours in bed in between bouts of physiotherapy, and listening to music helps their brain retrain itself and take over the functions of the damaged regions. "It's cheap and easy to organise," he adds. It's a little odd, however, that those left in silence apparently did better than those given audio books. More research needed, I'd hazard.

There is, of course, a whole branch of medicine called music therapy, backed by practitioners who are convinced of its value. One of them is Professor Paul Robinson, founder of the Medici String Quartet. "Music is potent in terms of providing relief for depression, anxiety and pain," he said. "Broadly speaking, music seems to deliver a 30 per cent relief to all these afflictions. If a drug company made a claim like that they would make a fortune."



In truth, these are symptoms which respond well to the placebo effect. If people believe something is being done to help them, they are inclined to get better. But the Cochrane Collaboration, the worldwide authority on what works in medicine, did find hints that music therapy really works. There have been relatively few scientific studies and only five that the collaboration's

## THE CLEVELAND THINK TANKS

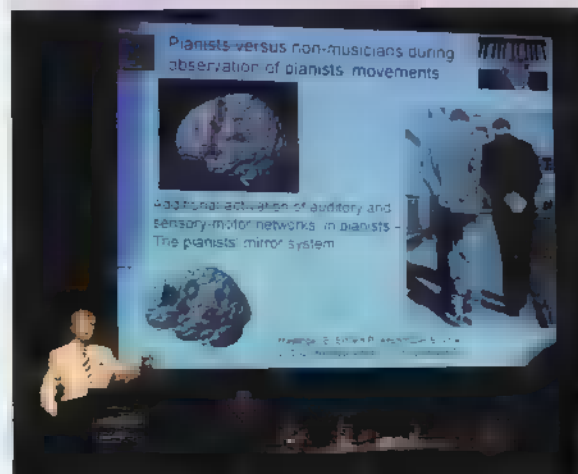
The study of music's effects on the brain is fairly new in the United States, but over the last five years it has gathered pace. One great centre for its study is the Cleveland Clinic. Rather handily they have a group of world-class musicians on their doorstep, so this year they joined forces with the Cleveland Orchestra. The start of what both institutions say will be a long-term partnership was a symposium, entitled *Music and the Brain*, which was given a dry run in Cleveland and then presented at the Salzburg Festival (pictured below).

The brainchild of Franz Welser-Möst, the orchestra's music director, and Dr Ali Rezaei, the director of Cleveland Clinic's Center for Neurological Restoration, the symposium included seminars such as *The Science of the Brain*, *Musical Abilities: Hard Wired or Hard Work?* and *Music and the Autonomic Nervous System*.

"It is a highly exciting area," enthuses Welser-Möst. "We're in a great era of brain research and our minds are so bound up with ideas of sounds and music – neurons in the brain communicate through waves, after all, akin to music. Dr Rezaei told me, for instance, that they can hang microphones that are as thin as a human hair into the brain, and that's how they can hear where a brain's rhythm is distorted and where there is a problem. He played various brain rhythms to me on his computer and again, there are these links with music."

There are, says the conductor, ethical as well as purely scientific issues. "We don't yet definitively know whether some music makes you more intelligent or has a beneficial influence on pregnant women, say. But there are sonic electrical impulses that can make somebody happy, or sad, in a split second. Scientists have now started playing certain music to single brain cells to see how they react. There's a danger here, that we take a road where we leave it to medical science to decide what is 'good' music and what is 'bad' music."

Welser-Möst is fascinated to learn not only what science can deduce about music but also what it can tell him about musicians. "Musicians can sometimes be very educated in certain areas and a bit left behind in others. Of course that counts in many fields. But quite a few musicians have these inconsistencies. Herbert von Karajan, for instance, I always found so confident on the podium and yet socially very shy. Glenn Gould was an extreme example." Welser-Möst himself is getting his head around the issues – he's just had his own brain scanned while conducting.





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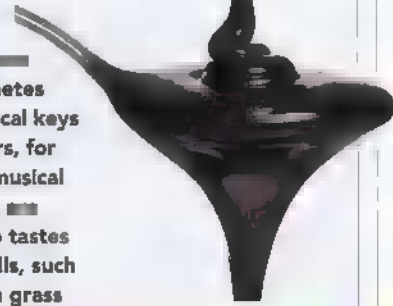


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While **synaesthetes** **musical keys** **colours, for others, musical intervals** **linked to tastes and smells, such** **mown grass**



demanding criteria. Of these, four showed some benefit of music therapy on depression.

"While the evidence came from only a few small studies, it suggests that this is an area that is well worth further investigation and, if the **music therapy** is supported by further trials, we need to find out which forms have the greatest effect" said Anna Maratos, an arts therapist who works for the Central and Northwest London Foundation NHS Trust. "The current studies indicate that music therapy may be able to improve mood and has low drop-out rates."

But by far the most celebrated scientific study is the one that gave rise to the so-called Mozart Effect. Published in 1993 by Francine Rauscher and colleagues, it showed that college students who spent 10 minutes listening to Mozart's Sonata in D major for Two Pianos performed significantly better in an IQ test designed to measure their ability to think ahead and see symmetries and patterns than did students denied Mozart. The effect was short-lived – something that cannot be said of the influence this little paper has subsequently had.

Some scientific ideas develop a life of their own, almost independent of their original inspiration. Sociologists call them "scientific legends" and in their durability they are akin **urban myths**. Examples are the claim that two arbitrarily chosen people in the world have only "six degrees of separation", that we should all drink eight glasses of water a day, that Eskimos have 100 different words for snow, or that we only use 10 per cent of our brains.

So it was with the Mozart Effect. Although the original experiments were done on college students, the message was quickly and inaccurately subverted to apply to infants. In 1998 the State of Georgia passed a bill to distribute free classical CDs to new mothers. Florida mandated that state-funded day-care centres play classical music non-stop. Jails in Texas played Mozart to the inmates. In South Korea horticulturalists played Mozart to their roses.

In fact, repeated attempts to reproduce the original experiments have failed. A review of 16 such studies failed to show any significant change in IQ. Any changes that were detectable, said Christopher Chabris of Harvard, the author of this review, were attributable to changes in mood or arousal and were short-lived. He added: "Parents may read this stuff, which has the imprimatur of science, and then play music **their children** because they think it's **proven way to make them smarter**. People may put too much faith in this instead of using what we used **call common sense**."

Listening to Mozart never did anybody any harm, and the whole affair sold a lot of books and CDs. It may even have given some children a taste for

classical music which will enrich their lives. But hopes that it will have enhanced their IQ are almost certainly misplaced.

What this tells us is that people have a great wish **attribute near-miraculous powers to music**, a testament to **huge cultural influence**. But just why music should play such a big part in human affairs is still argued over.

One evolutionary biologist, Geoffrey Miller of the University of New Mexico, suggests that music enhanced human survival by aiding courtship. It is certainly true that many durable partnerships have begun on the dance-floor.

Dr Tecumseh Fitch, a psychologist from the University of St Andrews, points out that it was Darwin who first suggested song as the basis of courtship, but he was talking about birds. If music really did improve human chances of reproducing, one might expect musicians to have more children than non-musicians. "That great musicians sometimes have many sex partners seems indubitable," he says. "But there is a lack of data. For every Bach with many children there may be a Beethoven who died childless, and for every popular conductor or lead guitarist there may be a lonely oboist or bassist."

Robin Dunbar of the University of Liverpool, on the other hand, takes a different tack. He sees music **a way of promoting social cohesion in groups that had grown too large for mutual grooming to fulfil that role**. At some stage in human evolution, he said, human group sizes grew large and existing social lubricants were no longer enough to smooth relationships. Music fulfilled this role. It is an ingenious theory, though hard **prove**.

Alternative explanations are that music is a form of play – an attractive idea as the act of performing music is described **"playing" in many languages** – or that it originated in mothers singing their children to sleep. Lullabies, say Dr Fitch, would certainly enhance parental chances of conceiving more children, if they could ensure their existing ones slept soundly.

But evolutionary psychologists are not happy unless they can explain a human trait by its contribution to the survival of the species. Not every trait is adaptive, argues Stephen Pinker of Harvard. For him, music is "auditory cheesecake", a lucky by-product of human history that keeps us amused but has no evolutionary significance. He believes it is simply a side-effect of the evolution of language.

Whatever the explanation, science has made plain what music lovers have always known. It is an activity that can dominate and shape the mind, enrich the spirit, raise morale, and give huge and continuing pleasure. For most of us, that is more than enough. ●

For Stephen Pinker,  
music is 'auditory  
cheesecake'



The Sundance Institute's annual film festival has become a hub for filmmakers and composers. Which was always the plan, chairman Robert Redford.

# Composing

in the sun



**L**ast summer there were rare sightings in the spectacular Utah mountains – not of the endangered bald eagle but of directors and composers working together on film scores. Given the importance of a soundtrack ■ a narrative, one might imagine these artists work closely together. But according to Peter Golub, director of the Sundance Film Music programme, such collaborations are all too infrequent.

Thus one aim of the Composers Lab – founded in 1998 and now ■ major component of the annual Sundance Institute – is to initiate dialogue between composers and film-makers. The other, says Golub, is to “discover and nurture new independent original voices”. Six composers are selected from ■ eclectic range of backgrounds and encouraged to experiment and expand their musical vocabulary. Sundance offers a creative haven away from the pressures of the professional world where, adds Golub, “if you go out on ■ limb and fail maybe you’ll lose your job.”

That freedom to experiment is central to Sundance. The Institute was founded by actor and director Robert Redford in 1981. “It was,” he says, “to be a free environment to explore and create without fear of censure and judgement. It was to be about diversity and creativity rather than commercialism.” His original vision encompassed much more than film. “I was too ambitious,” he confides. “I always wanted music and indeed dance to be equal to film here, but film is ■ popular that it jumped ahead and I couldn’t afford ■ make them all equal. I’ve had to build the other elements slowly, so now we’re building the music element.” The



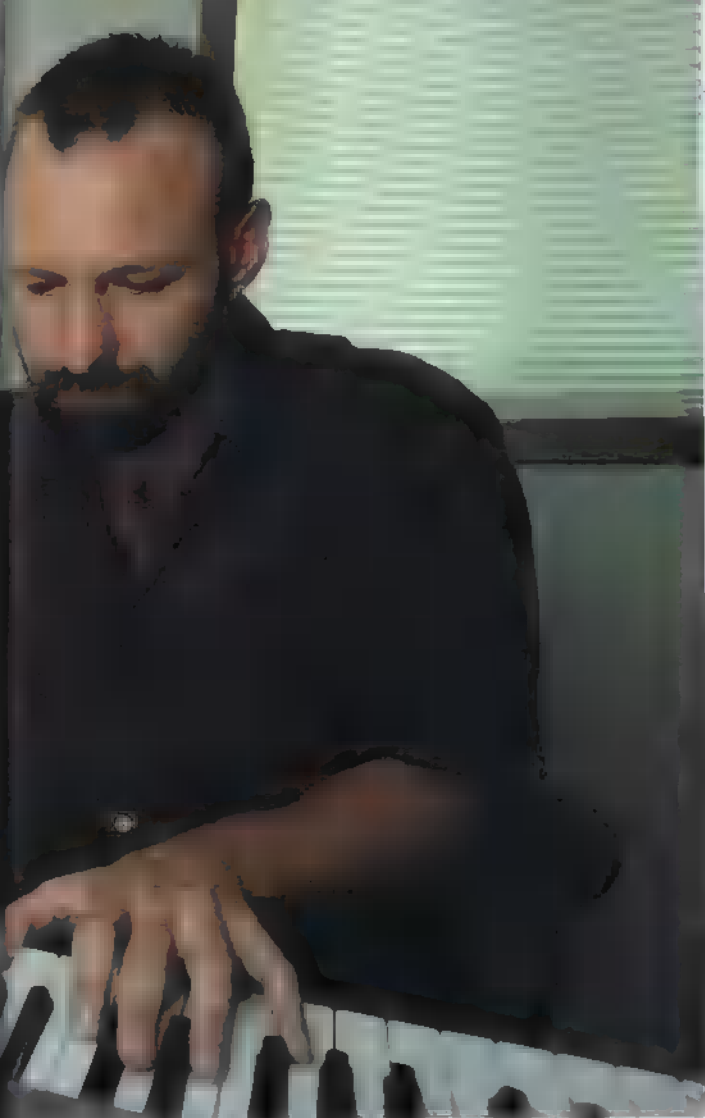
**Robert Redford:**  
he always  
wanted music  
to be part of  
Sundance’s  
mission

Composers Lab search committee recruits a diverse group of participants who are adaptable, can work to deadline and are willing to collaborate with directors. “I have friends who are concert composers who wouldn’t dream of changing something to fit someone else’s vision,” says Golub.

Each composer is assigned a cabin-like room with a computer and midi equipment, and some bring their own instruments. “It would be better if we had an orchestra here,” says Golub, “but like all labs we ■ process- not product-oriented. It’s more about the strategies and how you approach it.” The composers are encouraged to work with live acoustic instruments and each year performers visit the Lab: cellist Maya Beiser and percussionist Steven Schick were on the 2008 roster.

The Institute nurtures a range of voices, from composers who focus on traditional orchestral scores to those more interested in electronic music. The six composers in the most recent programme have widely contrasting backgrounds and goals. Nicholas Pavkovic, a classical pianist, prefers to work in the traditional orchestral medium, although he recently branched out into jazz. He says the Lab experience has been invaluable. Pavkovic – who aims to work as both a concert and film composer and admires those who do both, such as Corigliano, Takemitsu, Golijov and Glass – observes that “the sticky area is how you use the right style to convey emotional feeling in the film. Is your cue too jazzy or too cool for this particular scene? Are we too empathetic for the character? Is there a hidden agenda to the character not evident in the scene that the music should bring out?”

Film composers like Korngold and Waxman were steeped in the European orchestral tradition and the music of that period



**Nicholas Pavkovic (left, with director Frank Budgen) and Alex Wurman (above) are among the composers in Sundance's programme**

very closely followed the general aesthetic of the films. Golub points out that in the Golden Age of Hollywood, music often led to heart-on-sleeve emotional manipulation. "The famous story I always tell," he says, "is that Bette Davis is about to do a scene and she says: 'Do I have to act this scene or is Max Steiner getting to the top of the stairs before I do?'"

Contemporary scores tend to be more ambiguous, continues Golub. The music might add to the ambiguity, irony and multiple meanings of the drama – "*American Beauty*," he says by way of example, "had that ability to be amusing and bittersweet and ironic and many things at once."

So a crucial and recurring theme of the Lab, says Golub, "is to not overwrite and to leave space for the movie. Don't use it as an opportunity to show everything you can do".

That ethos seems to have struck a chord with composer Vivek Maddala, who has a degree in engineering and no formal training in composition. His music incorporates, among other idioms, tonal orchestral writing, jazz and South Asian raga. Maddala believes that "the primary value here is how to treat drama in music to serve the drama. You could argue that you don't notice the best film music. We're not here so much to hone our music skills but our dramatic skills".

During the first week of the Lab the composers write cues for an existing movie, in this case *Adaptation*, the 2003 film starring Nicholas Cage, and then compare results. Their contrasting but effective cues range from a waltz to ambient music with hints of drum and bass.

In the second and third weeks the composers collaborate with directors in the feature film and documentary programmes. Matt

Cartsonis – a composer who plays instruments including piano, banjo and mandolin, and who has performed in country and bluegrass bands – is paired with director John Magary to write music for *Blood Abundance*, a film about a single mother with seven children in New Orleans. During one advisory session, director Gregg Araki and composer Alex Wurman (both part of the Institute's advisory team) help Magary and Cartsonis explore musical possibilities for a scene featuring Antoinette talking about her children while lying in bed with her lover.

"These characters are born-and-bred New Orleans generations, so my initial inclination is to go for a very spare, deconstructed New

Orleans-influenced score," muses Cartsonis. After some discussion, the team conclude that a guitar is too rural for the scene and the sound of an upright piano would work better.

"I don't like music that just reinforces the action," says Magary, referring to Cartsonis's clip of bluesy music. "Don't get married to a concept," adds Arecki. "As a director, really think about what you want from a scene."

The participants also attend seminars covering the practicalities of film composing; demos, agents, publishing, fees and the like. Doreen Ringer Ross, vice president of film and television relations for BMI, has been actively involved in the Lab since its launch and says it provides a vital missing link.

"In film school they teach all other aspects of production but never get round to the music," she says, adding that the top film scoring programmes have no access to directors. "The six Lab participants are selected each year because they each have unique voices, not necessarily because they are the most incredible composers," she explains. "The chops are there musically, but there's also diversity. You need more distinctive orchestration in independent films. Be creative."

Industry professionals such as composer Tyler Bates (whose 50-plus credits include the forthcoming and much-hyped *Watchmen*) visit to offer guidance; he advised the participants to "remain humble. We're all scraping for gigs." He expanded on the realities of working within a tight budget – "You don't want to think, 'I'd love it to sound like John Williams but we don't have the money'. You need to figure out what you can do within your parameters."

There is still a place for large orchestral scores, says Golub, but for many indie films a lavish soundtrack is simply not economically feasible. For composers who enjoy writing orchestral scores, video games (an increasingly lucrative area) offer one opportunity. The soundtrack to the recently released *Battlefield: Bad Company*, for example, features a 70-piece orchestra led by Alarm Will Sound conductor Alan Pierson.

Aside from all the practical advice (and the opportunity to enjoy the gorgeous Utah scenery), the Lab composers receive a less tangible but perhaps equally important bonus: an ego-boost. "We're here of course for serendipity. That group of people have deemed that we are of a level and quality to be worth working with in this fashion is probably the single most redeeming event of my musical life," says Cartsonis. "This institute is helping to give me self-confidence and self-esteem, which very few of us in LA have. How could you? Music is not valued by our culture. The push to get me to broaden my horizons has been very helpful. It's more than just an honour – it's a tonic."

Robert Redford features in this month's *My Music* on page 162



# SUPERSIZE MAHLER

Mahler's **Eighth Symphony** is the calling-card for all orchestras with ambition: but which ones should you welcome in, asks **Ken Smith**



As soon as I got the invitation I immediately called my wife to tell her why I'd be gone for the rest of the week. "The Macau International Music Festival just asked me to sing in the chorus of Mahler's Eighth," I explained. "Seems they did a head-count the other night and came up with only nine hundred and ninety-nine." Before she could figure out whether or not I was serious, I was already out the door. About Mahler's infamous *Symphony of a Thousand*, I was very serious indeed. I don't often feel the need to explore a piece from the inside, but this was a special case. Mahler's Eighth Symphony has long been regarded as the biggest love letter in musical history ("Every note addressed to you", Mahler confessed to his wife, Alma), the most successful premiere of the 20th century (the initial Munich performances in 1910 being the composer's first unqualified success), and the most reliable attention-getter in the repertoire ever since. The Philadelphia Orchestra's US premiere in 1916 turned that institution from a financial drain to a civic asset. Nearly half a century later, Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic celebrated the opening of Lincoln Center by performing the first movement. Now, whenever an orchestra, city or country wants to ■■■■■ that it's ready ■■■ be taken seriously, you can guess what's on the programme.

As a symphony, though, the piece's standing has been less secure. Scored for huge orchestra, offstage brass section, organ, double chorus, boys' choir and eight soloists, the piece could easily be termed a dramatic cantata or ■■■ secular oratorio (the composer poetically called it his Mass).

But Mahler was an established symphonist who frequently used words to convey ideas, often writing music before a specific text was involved. Combined with the fact that the first movement incorporates sonata-allegro form, that generally puts the piece in the symphony category.

That uneasy definition, though, still haunts even successful performances. As Mahler cycles began to proliferate, conductors who had provided memorable Second Symphonies or insightful Sevenths often fell noticeably short in the Eighth. More than any other piece, the Eighth Symphony requires a traffic cop – not only in directing the forces on stage, but in connecting the ideas and inner musical relationships in the ■■■■■. A depressing number of fine orchestral performances have been dampened by the chorus, ■■■ by soloists not well integrated into the musical and emotional texture (though occasionally the reverse has been true). But many conductors, even after getting their musical forces into place, miss Mahler's delicate duality, whereby a boisterous, polyphonic "Veni, Creator Spiritus" is answered by the more freely homophonic ■■■■■ from Goethe's *Faust* revelling in German Romanticism. The Latin Pentecost hymn must eventually reconcile with the idea of humanist salvation through the Eternal Feminine, but most performances emphasise those contrasts either too much or too little.

As my stack of Mahler Eighths doubled in the past few years, it became apparent that it was finally time to re-evaluate the piece. Rehearsing in the chorus was the easy part; how does one navigate nearly 30 recordings? First, there's industry history to consider, which ■■■■■ archival live performances apart from studio efforts before returning to live recordings.



Then there's the composer's history. A few years ago it became fashionable for those seeking "the real Mahler" to focus first on ensembles that Mahler himself had conducted, namely the Concertgebouw Orchestra and the Philharmonics of Vienna and New York. Given the **reputation** of the Eighth Symphony, that seemed a pretty good place to start.

#### THE NEW WORLD

After initiating the piece in 1906 and before conducting its Munich premiere in 1910, Mahler had served as principal conductor at the Metropolitan Opera and completed his first season as music director of the New York Philharmonic. One could easily overemphasise the effect of America on his music-making; Mahler himself derided the Munich concert producer's "Barnum and Bailey" marketing strategy (although *Symphony of a Thousand* was in fact a reasonably accurate accounting of the personnel involved: 858 singers and 171 instrumentalists). But other observers in Munich noted the piece's "American" dimensions, and no doubt that sense of raw spaciousness did shape the piece's eventual realisation. Encountering Niagara Falls for the first time, Mahler had exclaimed, "*Fortissimo*, at last!"

Coming back to my 1971 Decca studio recording with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the combined Vienna State Opera Chorus, Singverein and Vienna Boys Choir, I find that **Georg Solti** is still the reigning champion of the "shock-and-awe" school. In terms of sheer orchestral brilliance, there's simply no better ensemble captured more fully on record. Right from the opening organ blast, which was added later in

the studio, Solti wields such command that no **single** element overshadows. A better **blend** of soloists has still never been assembled (even if others have sung with a better **blend** of ensemble), and the main forces complement each other perfectly, as if the chorus singing in Mahler's mother tongue tempers the instrumentalists playing in his orchestral father tongue.

The downside of all this is that his zeal to find the drama, Solti often misses the poetry. Operatic intensity comes at the sacrifice of symphonic subtlety. Detractors have claimed that the sound is more Solti than Mahler – and there are several recordings that are arguably more musical – but still, as far as phrasing and control are concerned, no other performance builds, sustains and releases tension quite like this one. Solti is still the standard with which to compare all the others.

That didn't bode well for **Robert Shaw**. Of all the conductors who made their mark with the piece, Shaw had the best grasp of the choral side of the equation. Given the size of his forces, there's a surprising level of precision and clarity. The young Deborah Voigt and Heidi Grant stand out among the soloists. And although Shaw's conception is more oratorio than opera, there's a bit of déjà vu hearing his pacing, as this recording is only about 10 seconds shorter than Solti's. Unfortunately, the comparisons end there. The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra is simply **not** the Chicago. It's enough to bring out the military strategist in me: if Solti could insert an organ, why couldn't someone airlift the Atlanta Symphony Chorus into, say, the Vienna Philharmonic? This is one case where I say with regret that the recording quality captures the orchestra perfectly, warts and all.



# NEW RELEASES

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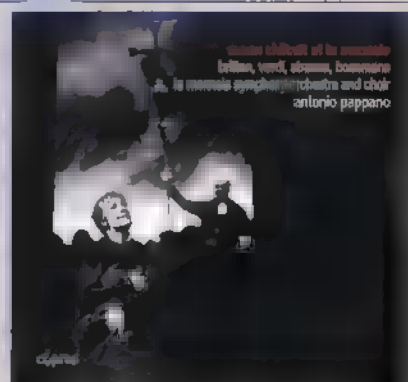
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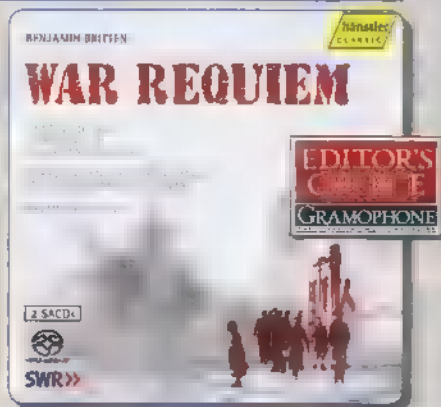
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## PREISER



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Anas by Glinka, Rimsky-Korsakov, Meyerbeer, Arensky, Alyabiev etc (1907-14)  
PR  
"reigned supreme in Moscow, excelling in lyric and Russian ancient recordings mettle." BBC Magazine

## PREISER



**TITO (TENOR)**  
Songs by Rodriguez, Murolo-Tagliaferri, Discepolo-Amadori etc (1930-34)  
"A tenor of infinite charm, Schipa made far more of a than many greater. These early 1930's recordings show him lighter music-tan-gos, and Spanish and Italian popular songs, especially from Naples." BBC Music Magazine November



## Coda Classics congratulates Stanislaw Skrowaczewski on his birthday.

THE BIRTHDAY OF OUR AGE'S GREAT HIS BEEN A COLOUR-CAREER. AFTER HOLDING CONDUCTOR A NUMBER OF POLISH ORCHESTRAS, WAS INVITED BY GEORG SZELL TO GUEST CONDUCT THE CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA HIS INTERNATIONAL INCLUDING WITH THE THE HALLÉ ORCHESTRAS. SINCE 1994 WE HIM BETTER ASSOCIATION WITH THE SAARBRUCKEN CELEBRATE CAREER, UEHMS PRESENTS AT A SPECIAL PRICE:

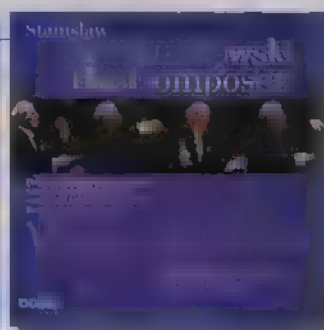
### Stanislaw Skrowaczewski



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RCA Victor, which falls almost exactly between the blandness of Haitink and the idiosyncrasies of Chailly. The sound is comfortably warm and spacious, showcasing the second movement very nicely. The choruses are far superior to Chailly's, and de Waart achieves a comparable freedom in the sound without totally imposing or removing his own personality. Ultimately, though, de Waart's subtleties are less memorable than Chailly's quirks.

Having covered Mahler's various turfs with mixed results, I decided to get as far away as possible. **Emil Tabakov's** 1991 version with the Sofia Philharmonic for Capriccio is the kind of recording you keep listening to, hoping it gets better. Alas, it never does. The chorus overpowers the orchestra in the first section, then seems miles away in the second. Playing is spotty, the milking amateurish at best. I then turned to **Antoni Wit's** 2005 account with the Warsaw National Philharmonic for Naxos, which was musically solid without being showy. Mastering both the broad and small strokes, Wit ■ comfortable tempi while coaxing a rare level of subtlety from his players. Choruses are clean and precise; soloists well balanced and integrated into the orchestral texture. My only complaint is an overly resonant acoustic, but Wit generally finds ways to make it work, mostly by stretching the tempi. After the Warsaw, which ran 81 minutes, **Neeme Järvi's** 1994 performance with the Gothenburg Symphony on BIS clocks in at 70 minutes. Strangely, the piece never feels hurried, and the performance comes together seamlessly, which makes ■ question anyone who cites tempo as a primary indicator of good Mahler.

**Klaus Tennstedt's** 1986 account with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir is generally beloved by the anti-Solti camp, and indeed his approach stands in great contrast. Where Solti is extroverted, Tennstedt is introspective; where Solti's soloists and chorus command attention on their own, Tennstedt's vocal forces emerge gradually from within the symphonic texture. The concept fully respects the integrity of the piece as a symphony, but in practice the organ and chorus end up sounding fairly anaemic, like amplifying a piano at the expense of the violin in a sonata. Tennstedt, though, is utterly at home, and the clarity of ideas in this 1987 *Gramophone* Award-winner still holds up.

**Simon Rattle's** 2004 live recording with the CBSO for EMI brings to mind elements of both Solti and Shaw – as if Solti were encountering an orchestra more provincial than Chicago, or Atlanta was facing ■ conductor not so out of his depth. On his own terms, Rattle brings Solti-like attention to the piece, but instead of focusing energies on shaping phrases for dramatic effect, Rattle illuminates the inner details that often pass unnoticed. In the end, sober commitment wins over emotional intensity. The recording, though, lacks Decca or Telarc quality: soloists (who are on a par with Shaw's rather than Solti's) have ■ bit too much prominence, the chorus not quite enough.

My pile of German orchestra recordings started looking less formidable the more I started listening. **Elijah Inbal's** 1986 studio effort with the Frankfurt Radio Symphony for Denon was fine interpretatively, but the playing lacked control and discipline. **Rafael Kubelík's** account with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra for DG, almost exactly contemporaneous with Solti, was perhaps the original anti-Solti in approach and has probably suffered as a result. A bigger problem, though, is the sloppy winds and brass and a mismatched line-up of soloists. **Colin Davis** has ■ different vocalist problem in his 1996 recording with that orchestra for RCA Victor:



**Claudio Abbado: conducts on Mahler's terms**

a superb symphonic choral approach is nearly derailed by a team of operatic soloists who seem to be performing ■ entirely different work.

A German recording fully worthy of attention is **Claudio Abbado's** 1994 performance with the Berlin Philharmonic for DG, the breadth of which contrasts with Solti's single-minded momentum. Not that Abbado doesn't move the piece, he just does ■ on Mahler's terms rather than dictating from the podium. The soloists are good but misbalanced (stand-outs this time are the men, including Bryn Terfel and Peter Seiffert); the chorus neither weak nor dominating. The real star, however, is the orchestra, which plays with a deep sense of the composer's idiom that few in the world can match.

A musical surprise was **Gary Bertini's** live Tokyo performance of the Eighth Symphony with the Cologne Radio Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, originally released on EMI in 1991. Later included as part of EMI's eminently affordable Bertini Mahler cycle a

couple of years ago, it was the highlight of the collection and remains consistently illuminating. Rarely does a tempo seem out of place, nor does the orchestra ever fall short technically or musically. Alan Titus is the stand-out in a superb cast of singers.

Two recordings, now, by **Michael Gielen**: first, his 1981 live recording by Opernhaus und Museumorchester Frankfurt. Gielen's coolly analytical approach, neither emotionally charged nor mystically exalted, is balanced by a palpably energetic performance – not lively enough to make this a primary choice, but at Sony's bargain price maybe a second or third. His 1998 recording with the SWR Symphony Orchestra of Baden-Baden and Freiburg, however, is another world entirely. Not that he's completely forsaken his obsession with counterpoint and thematic development, but this time there's more leeway for the heart – and the ears – in making beautiful sound for its own sake. Hänssler has not only captured the sound beautifully, but in pairing it with Schoenberg's *Jacob's Ladder* on its 2002 release, the label has nearly assured that Gielen achieves the Eighth Symphony's sense of transcendence practically from its opening down-beat.

**Kent Nagano's** 2005 release with the Berlin Deutsche Symphony Orchestra ■ Harmonia Mundi is yet another anti-Solti: where Solti pushes forward, Nagano dwells. Where others hammer us into submission, Nagano charms. Where others find transcendence in reaching their destination, Nagano focuses on the mystery and sensuality of the journey. The dangers are obvious, and Nagano's major problem is keeping momentum. Although most of the elements are superbly in place and brilliantly recorded – the orchestra shimmering, ■ chorus precise yet atmospheric, an organ that doesn't seem like ■ afterthought – after some ■ minutes everyone seems to forget where they're going.

I had already been contemplating a dream performance of Mahler's Eighth, one that combines the strengths of other recordings while downplaying their weaknesses (my own anti-Solti, if you will), when I encountered **Pierre Boulez's** recording with the Berlin Staatskapelle last year for DG. Finally, we have the analytical rigour of Gielen balanced with Nagano's mystical streak, a true symphonic texture worthy of a Tennstedt with the attention to detail worthy of a Rattle. Instead of the Grand Gesture, we get a steady stream of little gestures, all of which add up to ■ clear – and surprisingly warm – portrait that finesses any inconsistencies in the score rather than bulldozing through them. Does it finally replace Solti? Not really, but it deserves to sit on the shelf alongside it. ■

**Rattle brings to mind elements of both Solti and Shaw**



# A classical Christmas

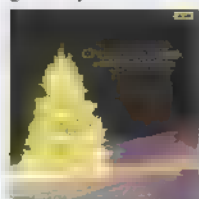
No little lambs but plenty John Stearn listens to a sack of John Tynan's album and in the shiny stars on the early recital – there's a whole lot of something that is



Worthy of celebration: the boys and men of Canterbury Cathedral

**R**ejoice, rejoice! Not one little lamb – John Tavener's and William Blake's, that is – has come my way this year and, until the very last moment, it seemed that nobody cared whether I "had myself" a merry little Christmas or not. Of the music (statutory carols apart) that has turned up on the lists more than once this year, Martin Lauridsen's *O magnum mysterium* is evidently accepted in ■■■ quarters with the respect it so reverently invites and Bob Chilcott's *A Shepherd's Carol* has won well-deserved popularity. And three of the English choirs here offer Britten's *Ceremony of Carols*.

Much the best performance of that work is given by the choristers of **Canterbury Cathedral**



under their director David Flood. The recital is called, appropriately, "Ceremony", by which is no doubt meant, primarily, the seasonal one; but at the centre of

its programme is the voice of the boy chorister, the treble, and that is something that deserves a celebration in itself. The species as a whole is

splendidly represented, but there are also ample opportunities for the impressive rank of soloists the Cathedral appears able ■ draw upon. Mendelssohn's *Hear my Prayer* and *I Waited for the Lord* ■ followed by Stanford's *Magnificat* in G with its soloist propelled triumphantly aloft on arrival, which generations of aspirants have regarded as particularly nice work if you can get it. Usually it is the undisputed property of the head boy (who is here the outstanding Joel Whitewood), but now it goes ■ another admirable singer, George Inscoc. Altogether they have seven treble soloists ■ parade in this recital and all in music that is well worth hearing.

The other recordings of the *Ceremony of Carols* ■ by girls' or women's choirs. The Ebor Singers and the Ely Cathedral Girls Choir both give accomplished and enjoyable performances, but the Canterbury trebles have the distinctive flavour of Britten's writing in their timbre. They also have more life and variety: the "Wolcum Yole", for a start, proclaims the greeting with a zest that makes the girls' enthusiasm sound lukewarm by comparison. The Canterbury acoustics play their part too, suggesting in the Processionals ■ infinity of plainchant where

one mirror-image begets another and so on, world without end.

Along with Canterbury, the choirs that have impressed most strongly in this present round have been those of **Truro Cathedral** and **Tewkesbury Abbey**. At Truro, under Robert Sharpe, they sing out and appear to enjoy it. At the end, *We wish you a merry Christmas* serves as a coda or envoi and the collective voice has a cheerful face. At Tewkesbury, too, they sing with spirit – their *Welcome, Yule* is Parry's, and

Yo-Yo Ma gets seasonal with a little help from his friends



none the worse for that. Nor are they daunted by the high proportion of "modern" works on their programme (and for some of them, such as Jonathan Dove's *The Three Kings*, we could dispense with the inverted commas). They can be justly proud of this recital, in both the standard of performance and the enterprising choice of music.

These three discs (from Canterbury, Tewkesbury and Truro) possess a quality that in a song recital would be marked up to the singer as a gift for communication. I find this rather lacking, or at least somewhat in abeyance, in the new record from **Westminster Abbey**. It begins well, with great delight in the *Four Christmas Motets* of Poulenc, but later, though everything is cared for, musically I don't catch a very lively or outgoing expressiveness. The feeling may be strengthened by the sense that the programme itself falls off in interest in its later items; and perhaps this is unfair to William Mathias's *Ave Rex*, but I do find a trendiness and more than a suspicion of manufactured modern "vibrancy" (now the cant word) in the tub-thumping rhythmic insistentcies of "Sir Christemas".

The **Ely Cathedral Girls Choir** and the **Ebor Singers** (of York) both have attractive discs to their credit, earlier discouragements notwithstanding. The **Ebor Singers** make a special feature of interspersing plainsong antiphons between their carols and the Ely girls finish up in grand style with *Let the Bright Seraphim*. Their intermissions take the form of



solos by their fine organist Edward Taylor: and the *Vom Himmel hoch* by Karg-Elert, which seemed likely to be another piece for organ, turns out

to be for organ indeed but with choir and solo violin, a rather less voluptuous relation perhaps of the "Méditation" in Massenet's *Thaïs*.

And perhaps now is the time ourselves to take an intermission. What are the instruments recommended in the carol? "Harp, dulcimer, lute", then something I can't quite remember, but it ends up with "the tender soothing flute". Nothing about the recorder, of which we hear plenty in **Christmas with Michala Petri**. There's some neat, agile playing in the quicker pieces, but too many are of an easy-going nature, their melodies not benefiting from the somewhat formally twiddly embellishments. I soon found I'd had enough. Quite a different matter are the arrangements by, or for, the **Imani Winds**, whose wide assortment of instruments is augmented by bass, piano and percussion. This is fun. Wit, technical skill and a sure sense of enjoyment make their bells jingle and their sleighs ride with life in them than anybody else's this Christmas. They even give a bluesy lift to *Stille Nacht*.

After this, **Yo-Yo Ma and Friends** seem an anodyne lot, going the dutifully multinational road and making it all sound much the same. Nothing surprises in this variously alike



Chantage: Christmas cheer

company, except perhaps the discovery of Renée Fleming among them. She sings with rich, deep colorations that put the other vocalists to shame (or ought to).

Turn rather to the playing of the merry organ at St Cuthbert's Church in Edinburgh. There at the king of instruments sits **Thomas Laing-Reilly** with a long and varied programme and no end to the resources of stops and combinations at his command. Disarmingly, he begins with William Best's almost forgotten *Fantasy on English Carols*, the spirited work of an English virtuoso organist writing before the French show-offs took over. Bach (Johann Sebastian and Johann Bernhard) and Pachelbel contribute preludes on the chorale *Vom Himmel hoch*; Guilman's *Noël écossais* and Demessieux's musette on *Adeste fidelis* are flavoursome; Pierre Cochereau's Variations then present *Adeste fidelis* formidably disguised. It is almost startling to hear the swell pedal introduced (quite appropriately) in Ireland's *The Holy Boy* and the organ's recently acquired Cymbelstern enriches the registration of Garth Edmundson's take on *Vom Himmel hoch*, a toccata-prelude in the French style very much flavour of the season with organists this year.

There is usually somebody who comes up with a timely recollection of the pastoral concertos of Corelli, Vivaldi and contemporaries and here it is the accomplished **Collegium Musicum 90** with their director Simon Standage. For Alessandro Scarlatti's *Pastoral Cantata for the Birth of Our Lord* they enlist Susan Gritton, precise in focus and delightfully pure in tone. For Telemann's *In dulci jubilo* they find soloists among their own ranks, the tenor James Oxley

and baritone Simon Birchall doing particularly good work.

This is an attractive record, rather more so, I thought, than the recital by Kay Johanssen's **Ensemble 94**

and **Ensemble Stimmkunst** and devoted to Christmas cantatas by Marc-Antoine Charpentier. Here the solo singing is of variable quality and the music itself too often makes one wish for more sustained development. *In Nativitate Domini* is probably the most satisfying of the cantatas.

Of more specialised interest is a recital of what is described as Baroque carols from the D'Oc region. The language is Occiton and the leading composers are 17th-century Natalis Cordat and Nicolas Saboly. Some of the material is fascinating and the **Camera delle Lacrime** are bold and graceful performers. The other recital of a relatively specialised kind comes from the **Frauenkirche, Dresden** and presents works by Christian Jacobi and Gottfried Homilius, more-or-less contemporaries of Bach. Both wrote genial, well-made Christmas music, Jacobi's cantata for tenor being especially attractive and well sung by Marcus Ullmann.

But if just one Christmas record is to be bought, and that to help along seasonable cheer among the family, it may well be that something with a wider appeal may be required. Radio 3's Choir of the Year, **Chantage**, may be the one to oblige, with a friendly mixture of old and new, and most engagingly new is Ronald Corp's *Christmas Mass*, which incorporates (at a guess) references to about 30 carols in its course from *Kyrie eleison* to *Agnus Dei*. And if that sounds like too much of a brain-teaser for the family who want nothing more than a musical excuse for their Christmas afternoon nap, there's a **John Rutter** CD. Forces of the RPO, the Cambridge Singers and the Farnham Youth Choir combine to make that the thing is done in style – the style being very much Rutter's own. It ends with *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas*. ☺

## The Recordings

- **Ceremony Ch of Canterbury Cath / Flood** Telarc @ CD80687
- **Christmas from Truro Truro Cath Ch / Sharpe** Regent @ REGCD281
- **The Three Kings Tewkesbury Abbey Schola Cantorum / Nicholas** Delphian @ DCD34047
- **A Christmas Carol Westminster Abbey Ch / O'Donnell** Hyperion @ CDA67716
- **Sing Reign of Fair Maid Ely Cathedral Girls' Ch / MacDonald** Regent @ REGCD284
- **A Ceremony of Carols Ebor Singers / Gameson** Boreas Music @ BMCD0703
- **Christmas with Michala Petri DR Danish Rad Sinfonietta** Hänssler Classic @ CD98 528
- **This Christmas Imani Winds** Koch International @ KIC-CD7748

- **Yo-Yo Ma & Friends** Sony @ 88697 34390-2
- **Adeste fidelis: Organ Music for Christmas** Thomas Laing-Reilly Delphian @ DCD34077
- **Christmas Concertos and Cantatas** Collegium Musicum 90 / Standage Chandos @ CHAN0754
- **Noël Ensemble Stimmkunst; Ensemble 94 / Johanssen** Carus @ CARUS83196
- **Baroque Christmas in Occitania** La Camera delle Lacrime / Bonhoure Alpha @ ALPHA117
- **Music from Dresden Frauenkirche – Homilius** Sächsisches Vocalensemble; Virtuosi Saxoniae / Güttler Carus @ CARUS83235
- **Hark! Chantage at Christmas** Chantage / Davey EMI @ 140848-5
- **John Rutter – A Christmas Festival** Cambridge Singers; Farnham Youth Ch; RPO / Rutter Collegium @ COLCD133





# CRITICS' CHOICE

Christmas is a time for giving – so which of the year's releases would our critics wrap up and place under the tree?

## Andrew Achenbach

Vernon Handley bade us farewell with this superlative anthology. These are performances of cherishable authority and insight from Bax's most stalwart champion and the BBC Phil respond with great conviction. **Chandos** © CHAN10446 (6/08)



## Nalen Anthoni

Grand and passionate but also poetically intimate: such are the qualities of Brahms's Cello Sonatas that Sonia Wieder-Atherton and Imogen Cooper share equally. The transcription of Bach's Cantata No 106 is most spiritually realised by Cooper. **RCA Red Seal** © 88697 20187-2 (10/08)

## Mike Ashman

Conductor Marc Minkowski's generous solution to what to record of Bizet's music for *L'Arlésienne* (the familiar if inauthentic *Farandole* makes the cut) establishes the work – rather like *Peer Gynt* – ■ ■ great lost musical drama. Period saxophone and percussion ■ ■ a treat, as is the most un-grand operatic way with the selection from *Carmen*. **Naïve** © V5130 (6/08)



Dejan Lazic's "pick'n'mix" formula throws the listener from one delicious flavour to another

■ ■ ■ COWAN



## Philip Clark

Orchestral music is here redefined by Bill Dixon. From a *Sacre*-like orchestral awakening, improvisers sagely anticipate the spaces opening before them as compositional structures evolve beneath. Impassioned music-making – shamelessly expressed. **AUM Fidelity** © AUM046



## Rob Cowan

Here the pairing of Scarlatti and Bartók shows them both ■ ■ skilled miniaturists whose list of ingredients included wit, novelty and visceral excitement. Pianist Dejan Lazic's "pick'n'mix" formula throws the listener from ■ ■ delicious flavour to another. **Channel Classics** © CCSSA23407 (4/08)





## Peter Dickinson

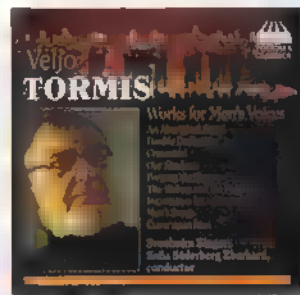
This is an outstanding contribution to British chamber music of the mid-20th century. Everything that Berkeley stood for is realised in these ideal performances. He mostly dismissed his early music, but the First Quartet is as good as the others: no wonder his chamber music is now being so widely performed. **Naxos** © ■ 570415 (2/08)

Widmann and Várjon's expressive range and deep identification with the music reveal their manifold beauties. **Enthralling**

DUNCAN DRUCE

## Jed Distler

Structure and scintillation fuse as ■ single, dazzling entity that resists gimmickry and cliché throughout the nine electronic works featured on this unique CD. Creshevsky's music is intricately crafted, vividly communicative and boundlessly imaginative. **Tzadik** © TZ8036



## David Fanning

Tossing ■ coin between the Belcea Quartet's supremely colourful Bartók and the Svanholm Singers in choral works by Estonian composer Veljo Tormis, I settle on the latter. Tormis is wonderfully inventive, and his exponents are brilliant. **Toccata** © TOCC0073 (6/08)

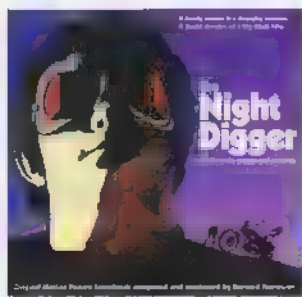
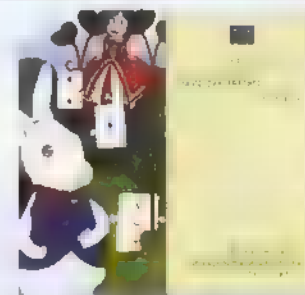
## Duncan Druce

Schumann's violin sonatas aren't usually considered among his most inspired creations but Widmann and Várjon's expressive range and deep identification with the music reveal its manifold beauties. **Enthralling**. **ECM New Series** © 476 6744 (A/08)



## Andrew Farach-Colton

Barbara Hendricks is at her youthful best in Del Tredici's witty and wondrous *Alice in Wonderland* setting, aided by gutsy, glowing playing from Solti's Chicago Symphony. This much-delayed CD issue had ■ jumping for joy. **Decca Eloquence** © 442 9955



## Adrian Edwards

This new release of film music by Herrmann ■ bound to ■ expectations – and it doesn't disappoint. In this score from a 1971 thriller, tension is sustained by a wide palette of string effects, and with first-rate playing and recording, this is a must for all film fans. **Label X** © LXCD1002 (reviewed on page 93)





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# Bach Cantatas Gardiner

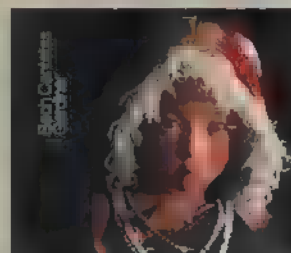
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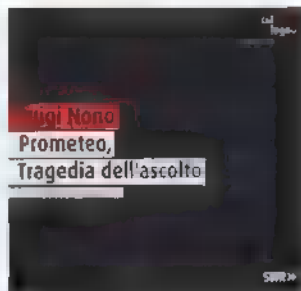
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Soli Deo Gloria



### Fabrice Fitch

This meticulously produced studio recording of Nono's late masterpiece includes a colour-coded libretto to aid comprehension. Despite the music's gnomic impenetrability, Nono's ear for luminous sonority is spellbinding. A must-have.

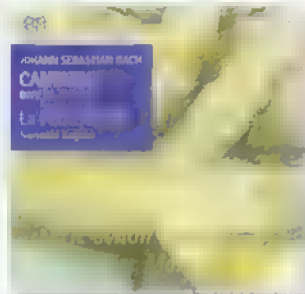
Col Legno ⑦ ② ③

WWE2SACD20605 (6/08)



### Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

Sigiswald Kuijken is gently ploughing his own furrow in a mini-series with modest forces and intimate conceits. The performances here of Cantatas BWV1, 18 and 23 are extraordinarily refined, coherent and perceptive. This is Bach stripped bare, but rapt. Accent ⑦ ③ ACC25306



### Edward Greenfield

Cheryl Barker's Rusalka sounds aptly girlish and fresh, and the rest of the Australian Opera cast is comparably stylish. Hickox conducts the magical with bite, bringing out the elements related to the *Slavonic Dances*. This is a clean live recording. Chandos ⑦ ③ CHAN10449 (3/08)



### David Gutman

Documentary film-maker Bruno Monsiegeon's deft mix of archival footage, interviews and performance material lays bare the paradoxes of Soviet musical life. There's only one Gennadi Rozhdestvensky, and he's on marvellous form here. Idéale Audience ⑦ ③ 3073498 (11/08)



### Andrew Lamb

Of this year's CDs, none has made quite the same impression as a collection of music by Australian composer Grant Foster. It's full of the sort of big tunes and indulgently lush orchestration that, alas, went out of fashion years ago. If that's to your taste, go for it! Bel Air Music ⑦ ③ BAM2041 (3/08)



### Lindsay Kemp

Abbado's CD of Mozart symphonies with his newly formed Orchestra Mozart was a heart-warming revelation. His superbly detailed and naturally tender performances overcome an unfriendly recording so that no listener is left unmoved by their wisdom and understanding. DG ⑦ ② 477 7598AH2 (A/08)

It's full of the sort of big tunes and indulgently lush orchestration that, alas, went out of fashion years ago

ANDREW LAMB





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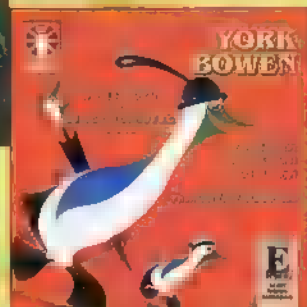
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## Richard Lawrence

It wouldn't be true to say that I enjoyed this more than any other recording, but nothing has lingered in the mind more than this brilliant film by La Bouchardière, who takes Monteverdi madrigals and turns them into a study – beautifully sung and acted – of couples breaking up.

Naxos © 2 110224 (4/08)



## Ivan March

As an ex-horn player I have long looked for a really fine recording of the Brahms Horn Trio on a natural horn (without valves), which is what Brahms himself wanted, for the "stopped" notes colour the melodic line in a very special way. Teunis van der Zwart's inspirational account is exactly what I wanted.

Harmonia Mundi © HMC90 1981 (A/08)

**Knox and Vesterman**  
convince one that the viola d'amore and the cello are only one instrument – some magically augmented viol, perhaps

IVAN MOODY

## Ivan Moody

The immense richness of the sound, and the total empathy of performers Knox and Vesterman convince one that the viola d'amore and the cello are only one instrument – a magically augmented viol, perhaps – playing this beautifully conceived disc.

ECM New Series © 476 6369 (9/08)



## Jeremy Nicholas

I simultaneously salute the Orchestra of Opera North under the talented Benjamin Wallfisch and the courage of Chandos in championing the promising young bassoonist Karen Geoghegan on this, her delicious debut album.

Chandos © CHAN10477 (8/08)



## Bryce Morrison

Grieg is still an underrated composer, and his often darkly introspective nature can rarely have had a more eloquent advocate than relatively unknown pianist Katya Apekisheva. To crown her offering, she is ideally presented and recorded.

Quartz © QTZ2061 (9/08)

## Christopher Nickol

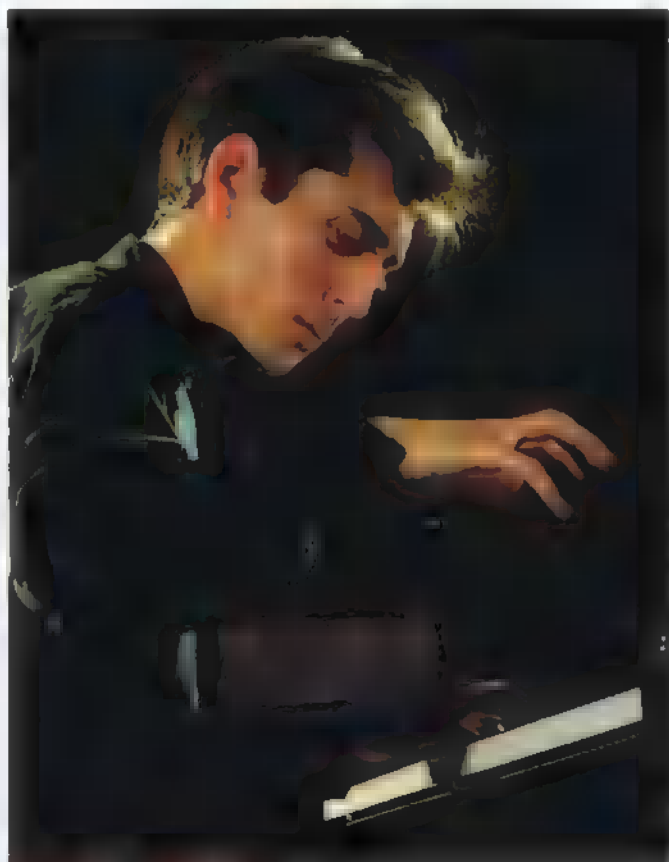
Should anyone say that organ CDs are about hearing familiar warhorses on gargantuan cathedral or concert-hall instruments, I'd point out that nine of the 19 pieces on this disc are brand new, and that Ayres plays brilliantly on a delightful clear, bright chamber organ.

Priory © PRCD894 (5/08)





IN CINEMAS FROM 19TH DECEMBER



### Stephen Plaistow

Consume Sudbin's Scriabin piano works at a sitting, if you like, and marvel ■ the quality of the notes, for ■ change, rather than the batty extramusical ideas. This is ■ exciting, articulate pianist, not too febrile in manner, and missing nothing. Read his essay afterwards. **BIS** © ■. **BIS-SACD1568** (12/07)



### Guy Rickards

Despite some great original recordings this year, ■ was ■ long-awaited ■ that captivated me most. Haverгал Brian's Symphony No 6 is enchanting, with a gorgeous long tune at its centre, and No 16 is simply magisterial. Cooke's Third is outstanding, too. **Lyrta** © **SRCD295** (9/08)



### Patrick O'Connor

David McVicar's splendidly unsentimental production of the sorry tale of the girl who couldn't make up her mind between love and riches has ■ well nigh perfect cast led by Natalie Dessay and Rolando Villazón. This is "the" *Manon* for our times – all the more effective for being totally in its authentic period. **Virgin** ■ ■ **DVD 505068-9** (4/08)

### Richard Osborne

There was ■ time when the BBC would regale us with improbable stories and delectable music from half-remembered operas. Opera Rara revives the tradition in an unmissable gallimaufry – wittily performed and superbly documented – from 19 of Offenbach's forgotten operas. **Opera Rara** © ■ **ORR243** (11/07)

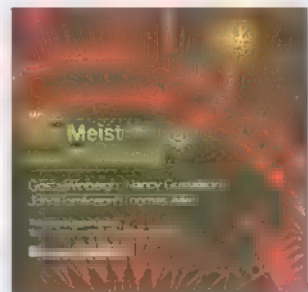


Opera Rara  
revives a  
tradition in  
an unmissable  
gallimaufry  
from 19 of  
Offenbach's  
forgotten  
operas

OSBORNE

### Peter Quantrill

Pure indulgence, this: Tomlinson, Allen, Gustafson and Winbergh combined. Now those not within tube-striking distance of London's Royal Opera House can share ■ the most easeful and nuanced of Haitink's Wagner interpretations. Graham Vick's gorgeous settings spring to the mind's eye as the cobbler spars with Beckmesser in Act 2 and chides Eva in Act 3: shadow and sunshine in ■ divine comedy. **Royal Opera House Heritage Series** ■ ■ **ROHS008** (8/08)





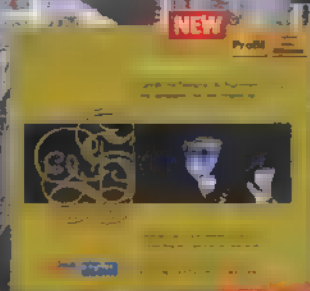
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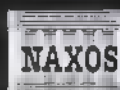
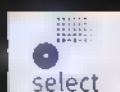
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CHANNEL CLASSICS

## Malcolm Riley

It's incredible how Naji Hakim draws so many colours from just 26 organ stops. Here ■ superlative performances of Langlais's *Te Deum* and Franck's Third Choral, ■ well ■ Hakim's own *Glenalmond Suite* and the delicious *Sakskøbing Præludier*. A total joy.

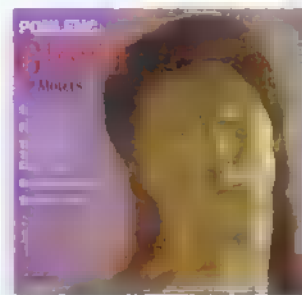
Signum © SIGCD130 (A/08)



## Marc Rochester

As well ■ being the year of the Credit Crunch, it's been the year of the Poulenc Pounce: the performers here leap out of the speakers with this unashamedly ebullient account of Poulenc's *Gloria*. A scintillating release.

Hyperion © CDA67623 (4/08)



## Pwyll ap Siôn

Serene simplicity from Skempton, the master of miniatures, in ■ wonderfully nuanced performance from the Exon Singers and Matthew Owens. Flickering candles, dark shadows and antechapel ambiances come to life here, making it the ideal stocking-filler.

Delphian © DCD34056

(reviewed on ■ 116)



## John Steane

This DVD of *Peter Grimes* has Pears singing with Britten conducting, as in the sound recording, but the visual preservation goes far ■ vindicate his not infrequently challenged view of the role. This is a wonderful discovery, rooted firmly in the original concept.

Decca © DVD 074 3261DH (9/08)

## Ken Smith

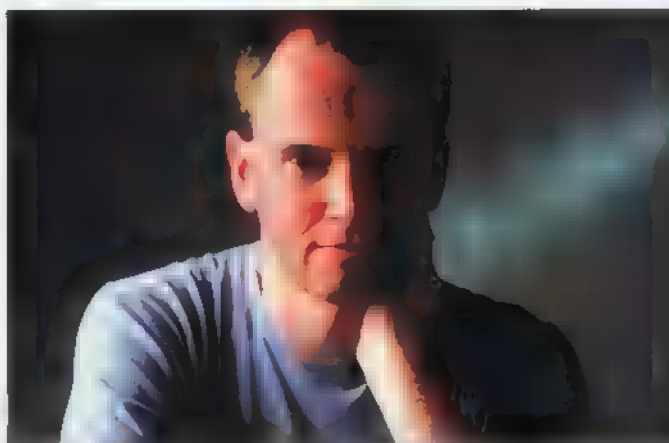
This brilliant recording makes ■ strong case for Janáček's most original, least recorded opera: *The Excursions of Mr Brouček*. It's not just the depth of the BBC Symphony Orchestra's playing, the top-flight Czech cast, or conductor Jiří Bělohlávek's smooth balance of drama, wit and romance. How could you not love a title character who gets kicked out of ■ aesthetic paradise for eating sausages?

DG © 2 477 7387GH2 (4/08)



How could  
you not love a  
title character  
who gets  
kicked out  
of an aesthetic  
paradise  
for eating  
sausages?

■ SMITH



## Harriet Smith

In this re-evaluation of Britten's works for piano and orchestra, Steven Osborne combines fireworks with wit and subtlety, and Ilan Volkov relishes Britten's unerring ■ for orchestral sonorities. Meanwhile, the BBC SSO players sound as if they're having a whale of a time.

Hyperion © CDA67625 (10/08)





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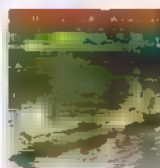
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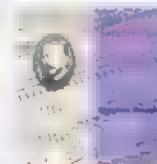
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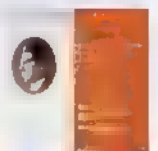
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### John Warrack

No hesitation: the belated issue of Reginald Goodall's performance of *The Mastersingers*. I was ■ Sadler's Wells on the unforgettable first night in February 1968, as well as on several later ones, and went out and bought this as soon as it appeared. Among many other versions, it has ■ unique magic. Chandos ④ CHAN3148 (8/08)

Could Joe Cutler be the best thing to come out of Neasden since Twiggy?

WHITEHOUSE

### Arnold Whittall

Nostalgia may not be the best reason for a choice, but the long-delayed CD release of the 1968 Sadler's Wells *Mastersingers* makes ■ plain just how special an event this was – even when the highest musical standards are applied, and all possible comparisons ■ made.

Chandos ④ CHAN3148 (8/08)

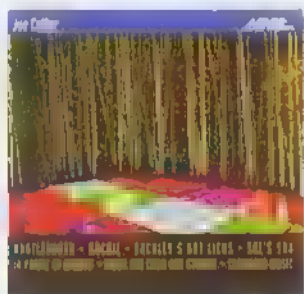


### David Vickers

The Brabant Ensemble's sonorously gorgeous exploration of 16th-century Spaniard Cristóbal de Morales's music is very special. The *Lamentations* ■ glorious, and it's fun hearing a setting of *Spem in alium* by a first-rate Renaissance composer other than Tallis! Hyperion ⑤ CDA67694 (11/08)

### Richard Whitehouse

This Joe Cutler CD ■ a surprise, its range and depth making him not merely ■ provocative composer but ■ substantial one. And the performances are a treat. The best thing to come out of Neasden since Twiggy? NMC ⑤ NMCD134 (9/08)



### Richard Wigmore

These are riveting performances. In Schumann's first two violin sonatas Widmann and Várjon yield to no ■ in Romantic ardour, colouristic subtlety and soaring freedom from the bar-line. And they make an eloquent case for the troubled Third Sonata.

ECM New Series ⑤ 476 6744 (A/08)

### William Yeoman

The beauties of this disc of 16th-century choral music ■ many and various. The repertoire's selection and arrangement is inspired, the singing some of the finest I've heard on CD. Mundy's *Vox Patris caelestis* is especially powerful – a real tour de force.

Hyperion ⑤ CDA67704 (reviewed on page 119)





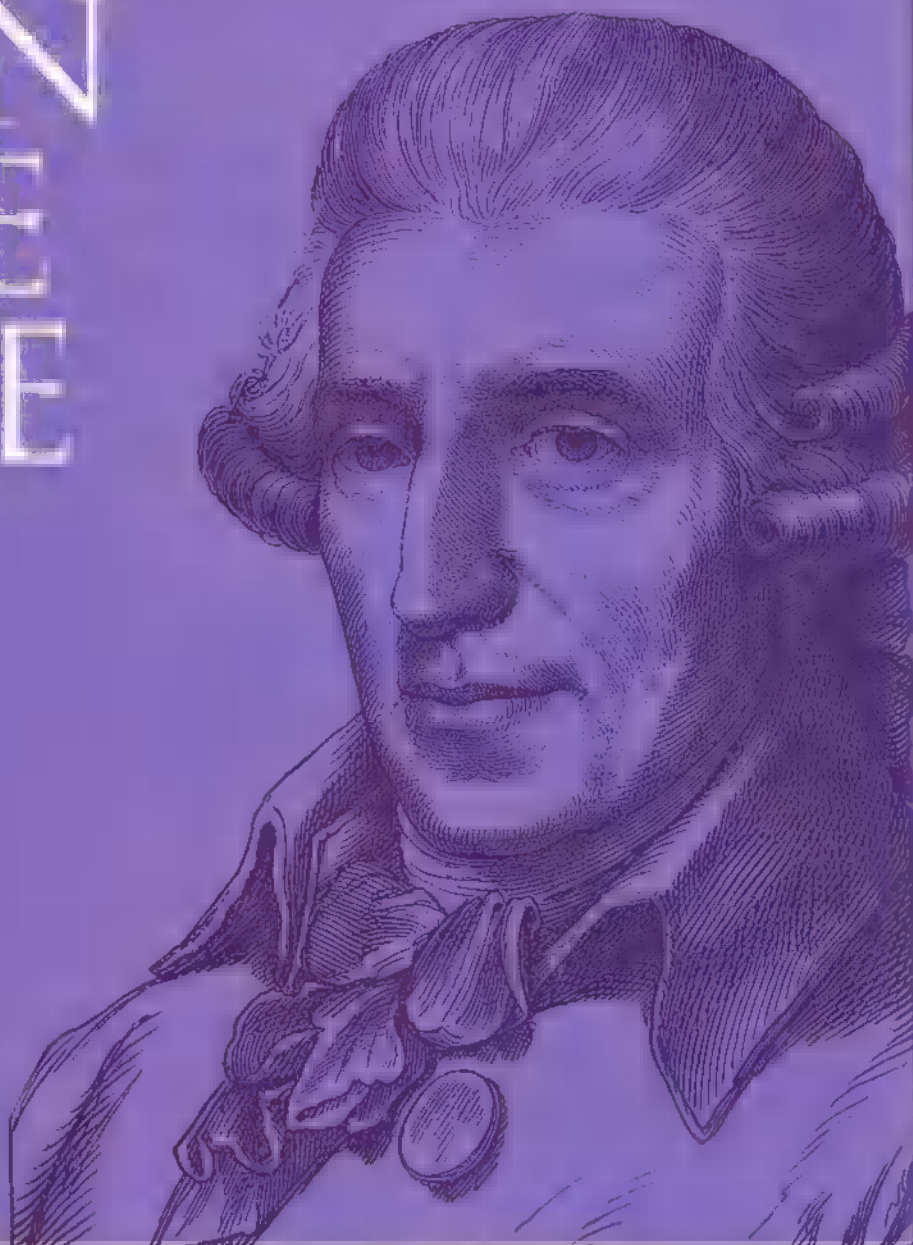
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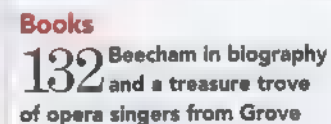
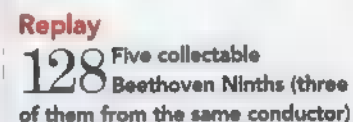
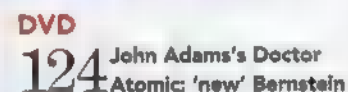
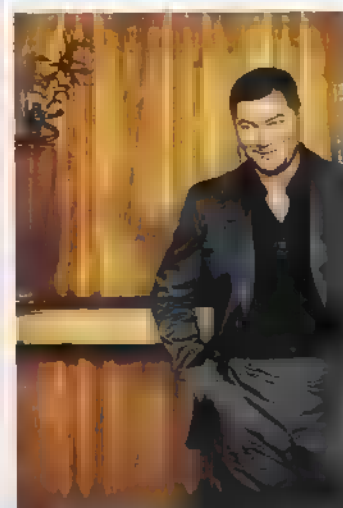
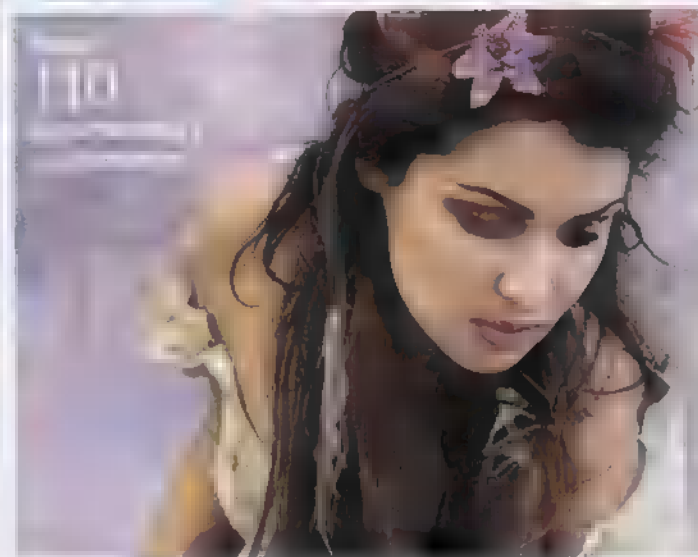
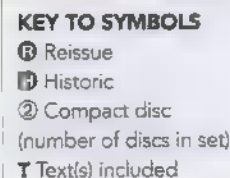
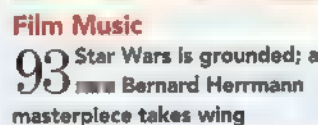
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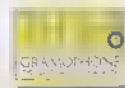
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**Editor's Choice**  
See page 10 and this month's cover disc



# Orchestral

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## L Anderson

'Orchestral Music, Vol 4'

Irish Suite. Summer Skies. Scottish Suite.  
Blue Tango<sup>3</sup>. Forgotten Dreams<sup>4</sup>. Belle of the Ball<sup>5</sup>.  
Alma mater. A Christmas Festival

MacDowell To a Wild Rose (orch L Anderson)

Kim Criswell sop William Dazeley bar

BBC Concert Orchestra / Leonard Slatkin

Naxos American Classics © 8 559381 (60' • DDD)

## L Anderson

'Orchestral Music, Vol 5'

Goldilocks – selection<sup>1</sup>.

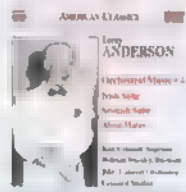
Suite of Carols (version for woodwinds)

Kim Criswell sop William Dazeley bar

BBC Concert Orchestra / Leonard Slatkin

Naxos American Classics © 8 559382 (52' • DDD)

**More Anderson light delights –  
and you get words this time, too**



On Volume 4 of this Naxos series, only the delightful *Summer Skies* falls into the familiar format of Anderson orchestral miniature.

The rest constitutes arrangements, including Anderson's exquisitely wrought orchestration of MacDowell's *To a Wild Rose*. If the inclusion of vocal arrangements of *Blue Tango*, *Forgotten Dreams*

and *Belle of the Ball* in a collection of orchestral works seems strange, few will object to the chance to hear Tin Pan Alley's attempts to capitalise on Anderson's successes.

The *Irish Suite* (the main item on this disc) – a clever compilation of Irish folk tunes – has already been recorded by Fiedler, Anderson himself (four movements only) and Fennell, and is done here with no less grace, charm and excitement. On the back of its success, Anderson conceived his *Scottish Suite*, but he completed only four of the planned six movements, recorded only two, and then withdrew the suite altogether. Though overall nowhere near as clever a piece as its predecessor, it's good to have the whole included here; "Turn ye to me" is especially beautifully done.

Previous volumes in this series have included suites of carols; however, the arrangement of less devotional melodies within the Christmas overture heard here seems to be much the most attractive of such seasonal offerings.

Another of Anderson's Christmas selections (this time for woodwind) appears on Volume 5, a

CD that's otherwise given over wholly to music from the only Anderson theatre ever to reach Broadway. We have here a good proportion of *Goldilocks* (a misleading title, for the show is about a quarrelling actress and a millionaire who eventually acknowledge their love), though it's by no means as comprehensive as the original Broadway cast version. It's not made clear why – in a less than overfilled CD – the selection is so restricted. In fact, it's less a representation of the show per se than a concert suite – an ad hoc compilation of show extracts and Anderson's own concert arrangements. Thus it offers something different for those who know the show as much as for those who don't. Kim Criswell and William Dazeley do the vocal items justice without erasing impressions of the original leads Elaine Stritch (especially) and Don Ameche, and ever Leonard Slatkin and the BBC Concert Orchestra provide performances full of panache which are absolutely in the authentic Anderson orchestral style.

Those who have followed the series so far will find these successors less superbly performed, recorded and annotated. **Andrew Lamb**

## Bach

Harpsichord Concertos – BWV1052; BWV1053;  
BWV1054; BWV1056

Francesco Cera bpd I Barocchisti / Diego Fasolis  
Arts © 47729-8 (68' • DDD/DSD)

**Fruity, no-nonsense Bach-playing that  
hits the spot when you're in the mood**



Diego Fasolis's recordings are often viscerally thrilling, occasionally veering into the throes of vulgarity. If one never quite knows how live "live" is, then at least with I Barocchisti the adrenalin keeps flowing and spontaneity abounds, as we hear in these committed performances of Bach's keyboard concertos for the composer's Collegium Musicum series in downtown Leipzig, c1730.

The rich and intense recorded sound mirrors the robust and purposeful string group which accompanies the brilliant and serious solo harpsichord-playing of Francesco Cera, especially in the minor-key concertos. The D minor is bursting with character, the inner parts weaving lyrically above the continuo. The stately tempo of the F minor works especially well, allowing the textures to resonate while affording a flexibility of line which implies a kind of elongated "aria" over the three movements. It's a most persuasive approach, intended or not.

The E major reverts to "period" type in some respects; the homely congeniality of the first movement (far less austere than the BWV169 cantata from which it is parodied) is atmospherically conveyed and the *sicilienne* middle movement is exquisitely shaped. Yet the articulation is too regulated, given the spontaneous surprises one remembers from Fasolis in his secular cantatas and *Brandenburg* recordings of late.

Cera embarks on a wonderful journey in the D major Concerto, if perhaps fractionally ponderous in the first movement. But then everyone else tears around these days and I Barocchisti relish the strong harmonic direction, the time to breathe, the space to take a detour and to celebrate the emboldening bass-lines. It's the kind of fruity, no-nonsense Bach-playing which – when you're in the right mood – hits the spot. **Jonathan Freeman-Attwood**

## Bartók • Mozart

Bartók Piano Concerto No 2, Sz95<sup>1</sup>

Mozart Piano Concertos – No 16, K451<sup>2</sup>;

No 17, K453<sup>3</sup>

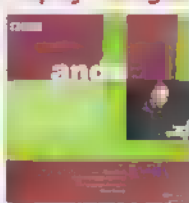
Géza Anda pf BBC Symphony Orchestra /

Pierre Boulez; English Chamber Orchestra

Legends © BBCL4247-2 (81' • ADD)

Recorded live ■ BBC Studios, London, on  
November 27, 1968; Royal Festival Hall, London,  
on December 5, 1973, and April 9, 1975

**A rich pairing of Mozart and Bartók  
displays the gamut of Anda's greatness**



Géza Anda's all-too-brief 30-year career (he died in 1976 at the age of 54) left us with a string of fine recordings including one of the first complete cycles of Mozart's concertos (for

Deutsche Grammophon) and benchmark versions of all three of Bartók's. It is with these two vastly dissimilar composers featured here that Anda is indelibly linked.

From the first bar of K451, the least-played of all Mozart's mature keyboard concertos, you know you are in for something special. Anda, directing from the keyboard, launches the ECO into a true *allegro assai*, exuberantly matched by the piano's entry. This is Mozart-playing of a refined order, robust, sparkling and fully in tune with the entertainment character of the work. The sublime K453 is a live performance from over six years later, no less successful in its precision, stylishness and general high spirits, though the piano tone is slightly glassy compared to the rounded studio sound of K451. In

**INTERVIEW****Douglas Boyd**

The sound partly becomes more transparent because of the size of the orchestra, but that's only a small part of it. It's also to do with the manner of the interpretation, what you do with the forces. It's about emphasising the inner life, about the release of the sound rather than the sustaining of the sound. The dialogue between the inner voices is as important as the so-called main voices, and that's quite an important starting block. I don't think Beethoven ■■■ particularly interested in melody. I think he ■■■ more interested in ideas. He did write ■■■ astonishing melodies, but much more important is the inner life of the music, the ideas behind the ■■■.

What we've tried to do – and it's partly technical – is ■■■ have a starting position with Beethoven that he ■■■ to express the dark side of human nature as well as joy, love and energy; he ■■■ also express despair and grief, and ■■■ demonic side. Look ■■■ the Seventh Symphony, for instance.

We only record live – which ■■■ partly financial but partly artistic. ■■■ offers ■■■ good picture of what the Camerata does live on stage, it's very much what a Camerata concert is like – it's an event. It's not ■■■ full-time orchestra: people get together and play like their life depends on it, rather than every day of the week.

We're embarking ■■■ ■■■ complete Beethoven symphony cycle. We'd already recorded Symphonies Nos ■■■ and 5, we've ■■■ recorded the *Eroica*, the First is being record live next month, next year we'll do the Eighth, then the following year the Ninth.

In Manchester, over the years, all the orchestras [the Camerata, Hallé and BBC Philharmonic] have had, cyclically, their ups and downs. What is really terrific at the moment is that this city ■■■ at its most vibrant for many, many years – you've got three orchestras all playing at the top of their game.

**Interview by**  
**■ Cullingford**

Pierre Boulez, Anda, who had been playing the Bartók concertos since the 1950s, had a sympathetic and experienced collaborator. This live 1973 performance of No 2 is played at a cracking pace, rich in detail and, in the treacherously difficult outer movements, simply thrilling. Yet few pianists (not even Pollini) have found on disc quite the same mesmerising, unsettling atmosphere as Anda does here in the central *Adagio*.

This is a valuable and well filled disc (80'59"), though someone should have checked just once more the copy for Bryce Morrison's perceptive booklet. **Jeremy Nicholas**

**Beethoven • Wagner**

**Beethoven** Symphony No 3, 'Eroica', Op 55

**Wagner** *Götterdämmerung* – Siegfried's Rhine Journey<sup>b</sup>, *Tristan und Isolde*<sup>b</sup> – Act 1, Prelude.

Isolde's Liebestod

<sup>b</sup>Birgit Nilsson *sop* <sup>b</sup>Covent Garden Orchestra;

<sup>a</sup>London Symphony Orchestra / Sir Georg Solti

■ ■ ■ Legends © BBC14239-2 (79' – ADD)

Recorded live ■ ■ the 'Royal Albert Hall, London, on September 6, 1963; 'Royal Festival Hall, London, on January 30, 1968

**Solti offers an epic Eroica, and from the Proms a Wagner hit and miss**



As early as his 1959 Vienna Philharmonic recording, Solti treated Beethoven's *Eroica* as a broad-based epic, the first movement measured and expressive in the Bruno

Walter style, the Funeral March slow of gait and solemn of visage. As the years passed, the two final movements were drawn into the concept making for a reading that was powerful, concentrated, entire unto itself. Given Solti's measured tempo, his reading of the first movement works better without the exposition repeat (a repeat about which Beethoven himself had doubts), which is what we have here in this physically imposing 1968 London performance. (In Solti's 1972 Chicago recording, part of a set of the Nine where "completeness" was a selling-point, the repeat was included.) The text is unusually good for the time with no spurious extension of the trumpet line in the first movement coda.

The Wagner extracts are taken from ■ 1963 Prom given by the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House of which Solti had recently become music director. The playing in Siegfried's Rhine Journey is terrific, as is the superbly engineered Royal Albert Hall recording with its fine detailing and wide-ranging perspectives. What is something of a triumph for Solti is less ■ for Nilsson who is not at her best. Though received with acclaim, her out-of-sorts Liebestod isn't a patch on the incandescent account she and Böhm conjure up at the end of the complete 1966 Bayreuth *Tristan* (DG, 1/67<sup>b</sup>).

**Richard Osborne**



**Gutsy, powerful, vivid – this Mancunian Beethoven is something quite special**

**Beethoven**

Symphonies –

No 4, Op 60; No 7, Op 92

Manchester Camerata / Douglas Boyd

Avile © AV2169 (74' – DDD)

Thirty years ago, "chamber orchestra" Beethoven was considered to be a mildly interesting eccentricity; nowadays it is practically de rigueur. The Chamber Orchestra of Europe blazed the trail. Douglas Boyd was its principal oboe for many years, though more recently his widely recognised drive and musical acumen have been put at the service of the long-established and nowadays upwardly mobile Manchester Camerata. This, I would guess, is one of their finest records.

The Camerata do not use period instruments (under Boyd they do not even use period layouts), nor is Boyd an interpretative absolutist. Harmoncourt and Abbado, his old bosses ■ the COE, have probably helped determine his approach, yet there is no sense that these ■ hand-me-down readings. The switch of roles has clearly refocused his interest in the music and rekindled it: an experience the orchestra evidently shares.

There is aggression in the performances, but it is an artistically contained aggression. The playing, with its gutsy, tensile strings and characterful lead woodwinds, has a powerfully communicative quality.

Both readings are rhythmically strong, though I continue ■ be "thrown" by the delayed string entry ■ the start of the hushed return to the dominant in the second subject group of the first movement of the Seventh (bars 141–42). As this happens three times, twice in the exposition and again in the recapitulation, it is clearly no accident.

The recordings ■ superb. For ■■ we have an in-house, orchestra-live product that actually works on record, with a sharply focused bespoke production (no applause) that vividly conveys the no-holds-barred immediacy of the music-making. **Richard Osborne**

**'There is aggression in the performances, but it is an artistically contained aggression'**





**Beethoven • R Strauss** ①

Beethoven Symphony No 7, Op 92

■ Strauss Burleske, AV85<sup>2</sup>

Friedrich Gulda pf

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra / Karl Böhm

Orfeo d'Or mono ■ C710 081B (47' • ADD)

Recorded live at the Altes Festspielhaus, Salzburg, on August 25, 1957

Burleske – selected comparison:

Gulda, LSO, Collins (8/99) (DECC) 460 296-2DF2

**Jazzy Strauss in the best possible way: a sensational performance surfaces**

Richard Strauss's youthful *Burleske* is a wonderful piece, scabrous, quick-witted, packed with invention and, like much of Strauss's piano music that it so strikingly

anticipates (the keyboard part in *Ariadne*, for instance), the very devil to play. Hans von Bülow was shaken rigid when the 21-year-old Strauss showed it him in Meiningen in 1886. "A different hand-position in every bar? Do you think I'm going to spend four weeks learning a cross-grained piece like this?" Strauss's young contemporary Eugen d'Albert eventually took up the challenge at a concert in Eisenach four years later.

It is a young man's piece, that's for sure. In the 1950s it was the twenty-something Friedrich Gulda who made the work his own. His 1954 recording with Antony Collins and the LSO won golden opinions and this 1957 Salzburg Festival performance caused a minor sensation. Here the jazz pianist-to-be is working hand-in-glove with Böhm and the Vienna Philharmonic whose characterisation of the music is ■ electrifying as it is idiomatic.

On his day, Böhm could also electrify with Beethoven's Seventh, though not here, alas, a disappointment that leaves the *Burleske* looking exposed and expensive. In 1999 Decca reissued Gulda's 1954 recording as part of a two-CD set of Strauss concertos, a set judged "uneven" by David Gutman. So perhaps it is a case of hang the expense and go for this once-in-a-lifetime, to-the-manner-born Salzburg performance.

Richard Osborne

**Boyce • Meyerbeer • Rossini • Tchaikovsky** ①Boyce/Lambert *The Prospect Before Us*Meyerbeer *Les patineurs* (arr Lambert) –Entries; *Pas de deux*; *Pas de trois*; *Pas des patineurs*Rossini *Guillaume Tell* – Ballet MusicTchaikovsky *The Sleeping Beauty*, Op 66 – selection

Sadlers Wells Orchestra / Constant Lambert

Somm Recordings mono ■ SOMMCD080

(71' • ADD). From HMV originals, recorded 1939-40

**Atmospheric 78-era ballet music from Lambert proves a constant delight**

These transfers from 78rpm discs made in 1939 and 1940 are fascinating evidence of Lambert as



sensation in New York in 1949 with special praise for Lambert's conducting – and, of course, for Fonteyn and Helpman. Lambert perfectly understood the needs of dancers and could consistently achieve exact tempi. This is clear from the well known Valse, taken with clear rhythmic precision rather than with the kind of erratic *rubato* that could disrupt dancers.

Lambert admired the 18th-century English composer William Boyce, whose church music was far better known than his instrumental works. He published ■ edition of Boyce's Eight Symphonies in 1928 and created the ballet score *The Prospect Before Us* by selecting movements and fixing an order in a full score without continuo. The result is very different from the authentic recordings available today, but he was a pioneer and these performances show his zest for the music and its dance potential in the comedy by Ninette de Valois.

Lambert arranged music by Meyerbeer for the Ashton ballet *Les patineurs* and recorded four sections. This attractive CD ends with a sparkling account of the ballet music from Rossini's *William Tell* with the Sadler's Wells players in nimble form. Informative notes from Stephen Lloyd: high-quality transfers. Peter Dickinson

**Bruckner • Wagner** ①Bruckner Symphony No 7<sup>2</sup> Wagner Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg – Prelude<sup>b</sup>

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra; BRAI Symphony Orchestra, Turin / Otto Klemperer

Medici Masters mono ■ MM030-2 (70' • ADD)

Recorded live at the Herkulessaal, Munich, on April 12, 1956; BRAI Auditorium, Turin, ■ December 17, 1956

**The Klemperer/Bruckner drawbacks on parade plus kitsch from Italy, too**

Even the most ascetic Brucknerian must look for a measure of lyricism and, dare one say it, charm in the Seventh Symphony. Sadly, these qualities were generally in short supply whenever Klemperer addressed the piece. His 1960 Philharmonia recording was never much liked in these columns (Deryck Cooke took particular exception to the slow finale). This live Bavarian reading is not markedly dissimilar. Even the seemingly brisk tempi in the first movement ■ subject to uncalled-for moments of arrest. Having Jochum's Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra playing Bruckner ■ home ground in Munich's Herkulessaal might be thought to be an advantage, but the orchestra, which

one of the great ballet conductors. The complete *Sleeping Beauty* was a major production for Sadler's Wells Ballet in 1939; it reopened Covent Garden after the war; and created a

Klemperer got to know better in later years, sounds wary and is often tentative in transition.

The Turin *Meistersinger* Prelude, a very Italian-sounding performance complete with Mascagni trumpets, is ■ real piece of musical kitsch. Having set out in a neither-here-nor-there kind of way, the Turin players suddenly fall in with Klemperer's magisterial gait ■ the contrapuntally complex peroration gets under way. Richard Osborne

**Bruckner**

Symphony No 9

Montreal Metropolitan Orchestra /

Yannick Nézet-Séguin

ATMA Classique ■ SACD2 2514 (57' • DDD)

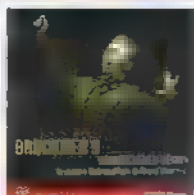
**Bruckner**

Symphony No 11

Mozarteum Orchestra, Salzburg / Ivor Bolton

Oehms ■ OC717 (58' • DDD)

Selected comparisons:

Columbia SO, Walter (6/61<sup>2</sup>) (SONY) 5153022BPO, Wand (A/99<sup>2</sup>) (RCA) 82876 62323-2**Two Ninths, one over-indulgent, one hesitant, both fail to get off the ground**

"Two dirges and a scherzo" is how many conductors have come to see Bruckner's unfinished Ninth Symphony. It did not used to be so. Sigmund von Hausegger, whose 1938 HMV recording was the first to use Alfred Orel's important new Urtext, took a little under an hour over the piece. And so, give or take ■ minute or two either way, did most

other leading Brucknerians of that era and beyond: Kabasta, Furtwängler, Walter, Karajan, the younger Wand. A great musician with a great orchestra intent on treating the Ninth ■ ■ drama of Last Things can stretch matters to a degree, ■ Giulini did in his glorious 1988 Vienna Philharmonic recording (DG, 8/89 – nla), though no one else in my experience of the work on record has successfully managed the feat.

Certainly not the thirty-something French-Canadian conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin, whose narcissistically phrased and excessively slow-moving account of the opening movement is partly glamourised, partly compromised by an over-reverberant church recording that favours heavy-laden strings at the expense of remotely placed woodwinds. After a *Scherzo* that is badly blurred sonically, Nézet-Séguin marshals his forces impressively for what is a well-shaped, albeit again very slow-moving, account of the *Adagio*.

Ivor Bolton's Salzburg Mozarteum performance is a very different affair. Despite ■ similarly leisurely starting tempo, the first

movement advances – now briskly, now lingeringly – by stops and starts. The *Adagio*, too, is pretty brisk. The sound picture is also very different. In this live 2005 recording made in Salzburg's Grosses Festspielhaus, the Mozarteum Orchestra's woodwinds are over-prominent, dominating the somewhat spartan-sounding strings. Rustic and naive would be one way of describing the playing, sour-toned and inadequate to the task in hand would be another.

Richard Osborne

## Chopin

Piano Concertos – No 1, Op 11<sup>b</sup>; No 2, Op 21<sup>b</sup>  
Arthur Rubinstein *pf* Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra / Alfred Wallenstein; NBC Symphony Orchestra / William Steinberg  
Naxos Historical ■ ■ 111296 (67' ■ ADD)  
Recorded 1953, 1946

**Jaw-dropping pianism, ■ if Chopin's subtleties ■ sometimes swept aside**



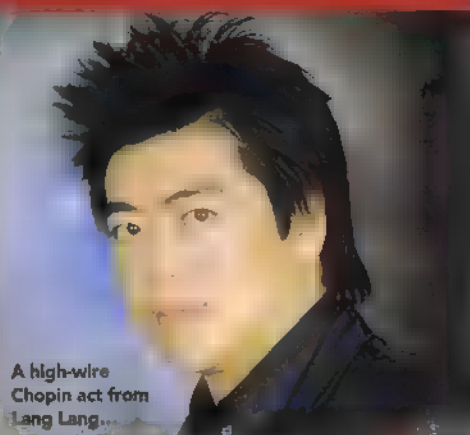
Complementing its Chopin release from Cortot and Moiseiwitsch, Naxos now offers the first disc in a series devoted to Arthur Rubinstein's recordings dating from the mid-1940s

to the '50s. Mercifully uncut, unlike Rubinstein's previous discs of both concertos with Barbiroli, these are astonishing performances, occasionally, particularly in the F minor Concerto, content simply to astonish. Here there is an almost arrogant dismissal of all difficulties and a prima donna stance sometimes hard to square with some of Chopin's more delicate and ornate confidences. In the scintillating coda Rubinstein takes his bravura to a spine-tingling edge, but in, for example, the *Larghetto*'s central storms there is a brusque, streamlined indifference to the music's finer qualities. In the E minor Concerto, while recognisably the same pianist, Rubinstein is altogether more subtle, following his characteristic exuberance and extroversion with playing of a rapt magic and delicacy. The music may be sent smartly on its way by both conductor and soloist, but the patrician ease, nonchalant glitter and authority of Rubinstein's playing are uniquely his to command. These are both extraordinary performances by an extraordinary pianist though of the two, the E minor Concerto is the more affecting. Mark Obert-Thorn's restoration of the 1953 sound is a model of remastery though even he cannot make the 1946 F minor Concerto sound less than cramped.

Bryce Morrison

## Dohnányi

Variations on a Nursery Song, Op 25<sup>a</sup>.  
Piano Concerto No 2, Op 42<sup>b</sup>. Konzertstück, Op 12<sup>c</sup>  
Ernö Dohnányi *pf* Royal Philharmonic Orchestra / Sir Adrian Boult; János Starker *vc* Philharmonia Orchestra / Walter Susskind  
Praga Digitalis ■ PRD/DSD250 231 (73' ■ DDD) ►



A high-wire Chopin act from Lang Lang



... while Sa Chen remains earthbound



Lang Lang is impressive, and not just for splashy showmanship, but Sa Chen is less so

## Chopin

Piano Concertos – No 1, Op 11; No 2, Op 21  
Lang Lang *pf*  
Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra / Zubin Mehta  
DG ■ 477 7449GH (USA 477 7984GH) (73' ■ DDD)  
Recorded live at the Musikverein, Vienna, on June 21, ■ ■ ■

## Chopin

Piano Concertos – No 1, Op 11; No 2, Op 21  
Sa Chen *pf* Gulbenkian Orchestra, Lisbon / Lawrence Foster  
Pentatone ■ PTC5186 341 (74' ■ DDD/DSD)  
Includes bonus Interview DVD

Chopin's two concertos provide plenty of virtuoso fodder to fuel Lang Lang's high-wire facility. To his credit, he consistently channels his rippling fingerwork and instincts for tone colour towards lyrical, poetic ends. His lively and varied keyboard textures highlight inner voices and counterlines without undue exaggeration, and help prevent the slow movements' broad tempi from dragging. On occasion he labours subtle points, overshooting Chopin's *poco stretto* in the E minor First Concerto's Rondo ■ playing echoed detached phrases with ■ buttery *legato*.

Unlike the skewed balances of his previous concerto releases, piano and orchestra judiciously blend. Perhaps the overly resonant sound partially accounts for his limited dynamic range; compare, for instance, his relatively tame declamatory octaves in the ■ minor Second Concerto's slow movement's central interlude ■ Argerich's dramatic intensity (EMI, 4/99). Similarly, the VPO's disciplined support offers marvellous string work and well profiled first-desk solos (save for the elusive bassoon in the E minor's *Larghetto*), yet muddy definition in loud *tutti*s. The Kupiec/

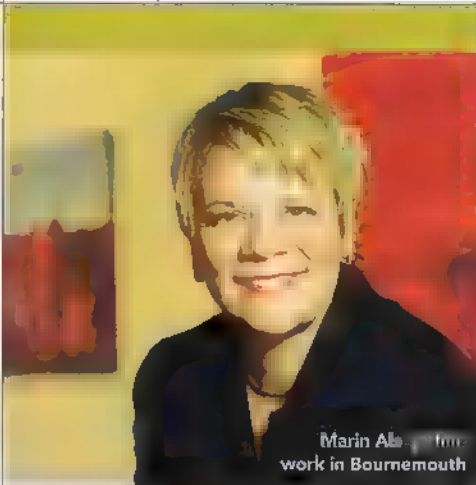
Skrowaczewski collaboration (Oehms Classics) remains preferable for clarity and true soloist/orchestra unanimity, not to mention Argerich for daring inspiration and even more effortless technique. All things considered, this release adds up to Lang Lang's finest concerto recording since his Rachmaninov Third (6/02).

A disc recorded during the 2005 Van Cliburn Competition featured promising performances from Crystal Prize-winner Sa Chen that piqued my interest. Sad to say, her Chopin concertos do not measure up. In both concertos' first movements, Chen's bland fingerwork makes little distinction between Chopin's melodic foreground and decorative background, and projects everything on the same level. Trills are often too loud in relation to the more important notes in long lines. She applies attention-seeking hold-backs, elongations and accents that detract from the music's character (the E minor's Rondo, for example), while, paradoxically, ploughing through sequential episodes whose harmonic masterstrokes might benefit from more pointed inflections. Her heavy-handed, practice-room approach to rapid figurations cannot hold a candle to Argerich's playful scintillation or Rubinstein's singing ardour.

However, if your main interest in Chopin's concertos concerns the orchestra, you're in luck, for Lawrence Foster is one of the few conductors who takes trouble to make Chopin's orchestrations sound well. Often-buried countermelodies emerge with shapely profile and character. Indeed, the E minor Romance's gorgeous bassoon solo seems to engage Chen's interest: listen to her genuine sense of build and long line in the central climax. I wish I could transplant Pentatone's vivid engineering onto the Lang Lang release, which is sonically mushier yet musically superior.

Jed Distler





Marin Alsop  
work in Bournemouth



Persuasive performances of neglected early works make this an essential CD

## Copland

Symphony No 1. Short Symphony. Dance Symphony  
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra / Marin Alsop  
Naxos American Classics © 559359 (59' • DDD)

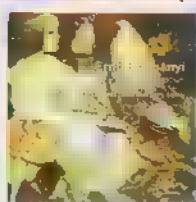
There are two attractions here: the only current recording of the *Short Symphony* and a fine recording of *Symphony No 1* – at last. It started life as the *Symphony for Organ and Orchestra*, written for Copland's teacher Nadia Boulanger whose performances launched his career in 1925. Six years later the reworking of the score without organ was first performed but it has never made much headway. Copland's own live recording with the French National Orchestra in 1971 (Etcetera, 6/91), has dated badly and is of only documentary interest. Alsop and the Bournemouth players make a fine case for this neglected score with many characteristics of mature Copland.

There are also two versions of Copland's *Short Symphony*. It was first played in Mexico City under Carlos Chávez in 1934 but the rhythmic difficulties were considered so great that the American premiere had to wait 10 years.

Meanwhile, despairing of orchestral performances, Copland made the version for sextet. There are difficulties now for the BSO but Tilson Thomas with the San Francisco Orchestra (RCA, 3/97 – nla) had more sparkle and a better recording.

There are odd circumstances about the *Dance Symphony* too. It was taken from the ballet *Grobg* – never performed – that Copland wrote during his student years in Paris. In 1992 Oliver Knussen conducted the full version, proved its quality an outstanding early-20th-century ballet score, and recorded it (Argo, 10/94 – nla). In the absence of a full recording of *Grobg*, the *Dance Symphony* completes an essential CD. **Peter Dickinson**

## Under-rehearsed, or seat-of-the-pants excitement? Important, either way



Ernö (or Ernst von) Dohnányi (1882–1960) left pitifully few recordings considering his eminence as a virtuoso composer-pianist. A Mozart concerto (K453 from 1928), a 1931 account of the *Variations on a Nursery Song* and five self-penned solo titles between 1929 and 1946 are all that he seems to have made – pianist until 1956 when he was 79 years old. In London that year he recorded for EMI over an hour and a half of his solo works (available on APR7038) and the two for piano and orchestra presented here, issued on an Angel Records LP (S35538), something of a rarity and, as far as I can tell, not available since.

Boult is, some might say, an unlikely collaborator and while there is no lack of life and colour in the orchestral contribution, the many patchy moments of ensemble leave one with a distinct feeling of under-rehearsal and "that'll have to do". On the other hand, there is the unmistakable frisson of flying by the seat of one's pants, something which subsequent retakes might not have emulated. There have, in brief, been many more accurate and detailed recordings (*inter alia* Katchen and Boult in the *Variations*, Martin Roscoe in the *Concerto*) but none more exhilarating (try the climax of the *Concerto's* first movement, 11'24"–11'44"). The contemporary account of the lyrical early *Konzertstück* is more polished, no less intense and blessed by the playing of the composer's compatriot, János Starker. Important recordings in pretty good sound.

For collectors of booklets in mangled English, this is a gem despite its writer cribbing chunks of Malcolm Rayment's original (excellent) LP sleeve-note. The back case even manages to get Dohnányi's birth year wrong. **Jeremy Nicholas**

## Franck • Prokofiev • Ravel

Franck Symphony Prokofiev Alexander Nevsky, Op 78 Ravel Fanfare pour 'L'éventail de Jeanne' 'Sophia van Sante me: 'Groot Omroepkoor; Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra / Leopold Stokowski  
Medici Masters (78' • ADD)  
Recorded live Doelen, Rotterdam, August 22, 1970

Such youthful energy...and only 88!  
Stokey and the Dutch on a roller-coaster



Listening to the 88-year-old Leopold Stokowski take a scenic if somewhat circuitous route through César Franck's D minor Symphony is something of a culture shock. This particular interpretation was also commercially recorded (the rousing Ravel Fanfare, too, both for Decca Phase Four), but live being live, the concert

draws us nearer to the edge – and in this case the edge is refreshingly dangerous. Quite how the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic followed every twist and turn in Stokowski's maverick journey is a wonder to behold, and so is the sheer energy and youthfulness of it all. Tempi vary virtually by the bar but somehow it all adds up. Of course there were vintage Stokowski-led D minor predecessors from Philadelphia but here the richness of tone, "shimmering sonority" (to quote composer Lex van Delden), jaw-dropping flexibility and communal excitement carries you along...though I'd leave your study score on the shelf.

Prokofiev's *Nevsky* is rather a different matter, fitfully thrilling but less secure overall. Then again, Stokowski hadn't conducted it nearly as often: he never recorded the work commercially though in 1943 he did direct the first American performance. "Robust and lively" is how I'd describe this performance, with tempi that sometimes sound a little rushed and "Battle on Ice" that starts well (aside for some imprecise string runs), accelerates from a very slow trudge – typical provocative Stoky, this – but disappoints when the chirpy string theme barges in at around the halfway point (6'08"), a little stodgily in this case, though the tension soon builds again. Warm singing from Sophia van Sante in "The Field of the Dead" is a bonus, the voice and orchestra staying the same course...just about. It's all pretty impressive, warts'n'all – and very well recorded though there are one or two odd balances in *Nevsky*. **Rob Cowan**

## Haydn

Symphonies – No 60, 'Il distratto'; No 61.  
Overture, Hobla/7bis  
Heidelberg Symphony Orchestra / Thomas Fey  
Hänssler Classic © CD98 522 (61' • DDD)

## Haydn

Symphonies – No 57; No 59, 'Fire'; No 65  
Heidelberg Symphony Orchestra / Thomas Fey  
Hänssler Classic © (75' • DDD)

Fey's quirky box of tricks exhilarates and irritates in equal



Like previous instalments in Hänssler's Haydn cycle, these superbly recorded performances of five symphonies from the years c1768 to 1776 equally invigorate and exasperate. Doubtless because there is already built-in zaniness aplenty, Thomas Fey doesn't seem to feel the need to "do" much to *Il distratto*, No 60, beyond the odd trademark tempo manipulation. He is careful not to over-egg the first movement's "absent-minded" jokes. The Trio tears in at much faster speed than the Minuet, its bagpipe drones raucously





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Ugo Ugo

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Sergei Krylov

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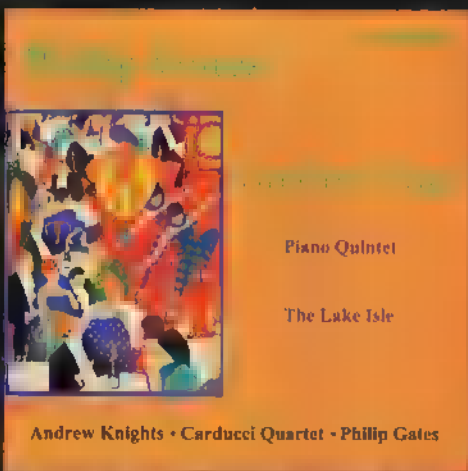
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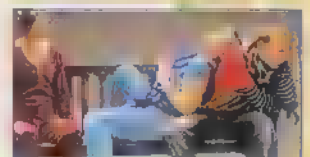
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strongest account – Rattle's, made while still in Birmingham (11/93) – is currently unavailable. Despite differences in approach, not least in duration with Rattle three and a half minutes slower (mostly in the sonata-form second movement and finale), Janowski's will do very nicely and is consistently more impressive than Cambreling. True, Janowski does not match Rattle's impulsion in the opening *Tanz* (also in sonata form) but his performance catches fire in the central movements, especially in the *Scherzo*'s macabre depiction of the instruments of torture used on the poet Hölderlin. Janowski's finale – much swifter than Rattle's – is wholly convincing where Cambreling's was workaday. The latter's coupling of *Arioso* is impressive, however, as are Stenz's *Nachstücke und Arien* and *Bassarids* Suite; but if the symphonies alone are your priority, Janowski's disc is the best option. **Guy Rickards**

## Liszt • Mussorgsky

Liszt Piano Concerto No 1, S124

Mussorgsky *Pictures at an Exhibition* (various orchestrations, ed Slatkin)

Stafford Smith The Star-Spangled Banner (arr Mathe)

Peng Peng pf/Nashville Symphony Chorus and Orchestra / Leonard Slatkin

Naxos 8 570716 (57' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Laura Turner Concert Hall, Nashville, June 21, 2007

**New hues and colours as Slatkin rehangs Mussorgsky's exhibition**



Mixing and matching orchestrations of Mussorgsky's *Pictures* could turn into a perennial pastime for Leonard Slatkin. This is his second exhibition, the first to be recorded, and the committee of composers (15 in all) continue to challenge the received wisdom that to out-Ravel Ravel is a mission impossible. Some would argue why bother? Others that the refinement of Ravel's work, brilliant thought it is, does not always chime so well with the rough-hewn Russianism of the original.

In any event, it's a fun game to play and the rotations and rehangers could run and run. Here are some thoughts on my first viewing. An elaborate new opening Promenade (with bells on, in anticipation of the "Great Gate") from D Wilson Ochoa (the Nashville Symphony's principal librarian) suggests a lively, enquiring, group of spectators. I miss Ravel's reptilian slitherings in Sergey Gorchakov's rather plain "Gnomus" but Emilie Naoumoff's "Old Castle" is a real find, its alto flute a wistful alternative to Ravel's saxophone with canonic solo piano eerily recalling Mussorgsky's original as if from some parallel universe. Vladimir Ashkenazy's "Bydlo" is properly gritty in unison horns (*fortissimo* from the start, as per Mussorgsky's original) and Lucien Cailliet goes quite Busby Berkeley with his "Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks". I've always loved Stokowski's "Hut on Fowl's Legs". Stokoy's

bonny Baba-Yaga gets quite a tailwind of gusty whooping horns and her bloodshot eyes glow in the violin harmonics. I miss Ravel's brassy triplets in Douglas Gamley's "Great Gate" but who could resist the churchy plainchant replete with chorus and organ (though why not at the close?). The pensive and reactive promenades are well chosen – the Walter Goehr is especially effective – and the playing is efficient rather than exciting.

Quite where the Liszt First Piano Concerto fits into all of this is anyone's guess, as is whether Peng Peng will soon be up there with Lang Lang in the Chinese superstar stakes. On this evidence he is scarcely accomplished, a 16-year-old with a 60-year-old's nose for that old-world Lisztian style. And since we're in Nashville, Slatkin signs off with Rob Mathe's very filmic, post-9/11 take on *The Star-Spangled Banner*. **Edward Seckerson**

## Mahler

Symphony No 5

Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra / Mariss Jansons

RCO Live RCO08007 (72' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, in October 2007 and January 2008

Selected comparison:

Zürich Tonhalle, Znamen (11/08) (RCA) 88697 31450-2

**Sophisticated and civilised, even if Jansons irons out some of the irony**



While Mariss Jansons's repertoire isn't large it is always perfectly formed with Mahler somewhere close to its heart.

Compared to David Zinman's squeaky-clean Fifth, Jansons pursues a traditional line, seeing it in the conductor's role in micromanage tempo relationships and textural detail as well to secure the best playing. Not a challenge for the Royal Concertgebouw, probably the most experienced of all Mahler orchestras.

Jansons's account, though edited together from several concerts, feels genuinely live, not just because he's an enthusiastic vocal participant in the manner of Sir Colin Davis! Things simply get better as the evening proceeds. For all the beauties unearthed, the first two movements lose some of their coherence and gravitas when the underlying pulse is as richly varied as it is here. There are gorgeous moments but a generally softer grain than one is accustomed to. Disruptive details are downplayed – take the peremptory *pizzicato* concluding Mahler's funeral march (here by turns rigidly militaristic and affectionately indulged). The ironic risks becoming merely picturesque, thanks in part to the typically accommodating sound favoured by RCO Live.

The *Scherzo* is carefully characterised, the *Adagietto* something of a triumph. Quite a feat to make its over-familiar progression sound natural and unaffected, but one is aware of the artifice behind the illusion of single breath. Perhaps you find Bernstein too laboured and latter-day

interpreters too fast? Adopting a middle course, Jansons subtly suggests that this might really be a love letter to Alma. The finale goes splendidly too. Notwithstanding the sedate apotheosis of the chorale theme, it's difficult to remain unmoved by the maestro's absolute control as his players make their dash to the finishing-line. The ecstatic audience response suggests that you may enjoy this performance more than I did. Sophisticated, civilised and meticulous, what's missing is a certain edgy intensity. **David Gutman**

## Mozart

Piano Concertos –

No 12, K414; No 13, K415;

No 26, 'Coronation', K537.

Piano Sonatas – No 8, K310;

No 14, K457. Fantasias – K397; K475.

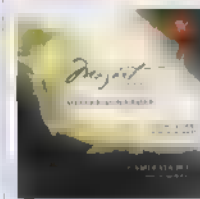
Adagio, K540. Rondo, K511

Oliver Schnyder pf

Camerata Bern / Erich Höbarth

RCA Red Seal 32317-2 (147' • DDD)

**Stripped down, string-only versions highlight that something is missing**



Strings-only scores of these concertos probably garnered more performances, which is why Mozart authorised them. But are these denuded versions relevant

today? K414 just gets by without the oboes and horns, but the absence of woodwind, brass and timpani enfeebles K415 and belittles K537. The autograph of this work shows that the left-hand piano part is missing from the whole of the slow movement and large portions of the outer ones. Though the gaps were probably filled by the publisher, Johann André, the work, as conceived, remains large; and if the soloist offers no dynamic or rhythmic variety, many of the fast passages sound empty rhetorical and small-scale. They do so because Oliver Schnyder doesn't accent the phrases according to their critical notes; instead he allows them to skate along nonchalantly. This flaw arises in the other concertos too; a pity because his interpretations of the slow movements are touching. Erich Höbarth leads an expert Camerata Bern but his direction, though strongly felt, has neither subtle expressive point nor textural light and shade.

Schnyder's playing of the solo pieces reveals a dichotomy too. Difficulties don't challenge him but he does at times slacken his control of rapid tempi. At worst, it leads to impressions of aimlessness in the fast movements of K310 and the *Allegro assai* finale of K457. Offsetting these is the positive side to his musicianship. He senses the intense depths of the Rondo, K511, and Adagio, K540, and shapes them with care and receptivity. RCA has recorded him well, though differently on each disc. The concerto balance varies but the orchestral sound is very good with the double bass a realistic presence.

**Nalen Anthoni**



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## Penderecki

Concerto grosso No 1<sup>a</sup>. Largo<sup>b</sup>. Sonata<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Ivan Monighetti, <sup>ab</sup>Arto Noras,  
<sup>b</sup>Rafal Kwiatkowski vs Warsaw National  
Philharmonic Orchestra / Antoni Wit  
Naxos © 8 570509 (74' • DDD)

**Cellists to the fore but it's the 'greater' work which makes less of ■ impact**



Penderecki's Sonata for cello and orchestra (1964) embodies his transition from the turbulent texturalism of his earliest works to the more expansive thematism and rooted harmonies of the idiom fully revealed in the *St Luke Passion*. Though almost a miniature by his later standards, the Sonata parades an intriguing mix of styles, with more than a passing nod to those demonic caperings, stemming from Shostakovich, which would come to full flower in Penderecki's operas *The Devils of London* and *Ubu Rex*.

Such pointed forcefulness is much less evident in the disc's pair of large-scale later pieces. It's tempting to claim that the Concerto grosso (2000), while three times the length of the Sonata, and with three soloists to the Sonata's one, has barely a third of the musical substance. Those drooping laments endemic to Penderecki's neo-romantic idiom are thick on the ground, and the last two of the work's six movements are particularly prone to predictable note-spinning. There are all too few of those less formulaic moments which make the fourth movement the most interesting.

Nevertheless, the work from 2003 called Largo, ■ concerto in three movements, none of which is actually marked *largo*, has more personality and more cogency. Perhaps Penderecki was enlivened by the Rostropovich commission (the 2005 premiere was one of the great cellist's last appearances) and among its strengths are a beefy, dance-like march (more echoes of Shostakovich) and a poignant, uneasily serene ending. Arto Noras is an eloquent soloist in *Largo*, and all the other performers emerge with credit in recordings that tend to home in on the soloists while maintaining a rather resonant acoustic. **Arnold Whittall**

## Pizzetti

Piano Concerto, 'Canti della stagione alta'.

Rondò Veneziano

<sup>a</sup>Aldo Ciccolini pf

Montpellier Languedoc-Roussillon National

Orchestra / Friedemann Layer

Accord © 2 480 ■■■ (61' • DDD). Recorded live

■ Le Corum, Montpellier, ■ July 17, 2006

**Good intentions but surely this is too self-indulgent for most tastes**

The annual festival mounted jointly by Radio France and the Orchestre National de



Montpellier Languedoc-Roussillon is admirable in its determination to leave the beaten track of standard repertoire ■ often as possible.

However, in 2006 it fell flat on its face with this pair of little-known works by Ildebrando Pizzetti.

They date from 1929-30, when Pizzetti was approaching 50 and taking every opportunity to indulge in his own fervent brand of idealised and reactionary nationalism. *Canti della stagione alta* (not called "concerto" by the composer) actually begins rather attractively, in the vein of Rachmaninov's Third Concerto, though the melody is more modal, more potentially folk-like, than in that mighty Russian work. However, what happens over the next 36 minutes is so much episodic bombast. A spirit of self-indulgent rhapsodising predominates and prevents what could have been ■ attempt to depict some kind of summery pastoral idyll (the "high season" of the title) from gaining more than a fleeting foothold on the listener's attention.

If possible, the *Rondò Veneziano* is even worse, managing to be remorselessly dense, devoid of any expressive subtlety, and making nonsense of Pizzetti's pretensions to have found inspiration in the pure melody of Gregorian chant. The audience in Montpellier seems ■ have enjoyed it all, but the radio recording can do little to provide palatable textures and balances when the composer has so determinedly resisted them.

**Arnold Whittall**

## Prokofiev

Complete Symphonies

Gürzenich Orchestra, Cologne / Dmitri Kitaenko  
Phoenix Edition ■ © 135 (4h 42' • DDD)

## Prokofiev

Complete Symphonies

Royal Scottish National Orchestra / Neeme Järvi

Chandos © 44 CHAN10500X (4h 21' • DDD)

From CHAN8359 (5/85), CHAN8368 (9/85),

CHAN8400 ■ CHAN8401 (11/85), CHAN8442

(4/86), CHAN8450 (7/86)

Selected comparisons:

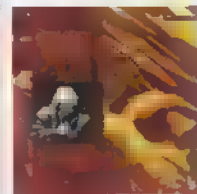
BPO, Ozawa (12/00) (DG) 463 761-2 ■■■■

French Natl Orch, Rostropovich (6/03<sup>+</sup>) (ERAT) 2564 69675-5

LSO, Gergiev (6/06) (PHIL) 475 7655PM4

**One old friend, one newcomer, broadening the choice in Prokofiev**

While Shostakovich's symphonies are ■ repertoire nowadays, Prokofiev's symphonic output has been less fortunate. This may be changing. Even the Berlin Philharmonic has attempted them, though sadly Ozawa's direction is lacklustre and the sound stage seems to have been created ■ the mixing desk. Gergiev's *intégrale* is vastly superior when not merely frenetic but it too has sonic limitations, the blunter sound of



London's Barbican Hall all too faithfully conveyed.

There's room for the latest sets, one an old friend, the other new to the lists.

As a Prokofiev interpreter Neeme Järvi is among the best. The wide-open spaces conjured by the Chandos sound team can't quite disguise the weak string tone and there are some awkward corners in the playing.

Nevertheless this remains an attractive, well annotated option at its new price.

The Kitaenko cycle proves controversial. Sonically speaking it's ahead of the competition with the orchestra exceptionally well prepared – live recordings maybe but you'd hardly register the fact as Cologne is blessed with an acoustically wonderful hall. I just wasn't sure what to make of the conductor's consistently broad and lyrical approach. The resort to five rather than the customary four CDs (as usual including the revised and unrevised *Fourth*s) does at least allow for a logical presentation, notwithstanding ■ few eccentricities in the multinational booklet-notes.

For most listeners choice will rest between Gergiev and Kitaenko and it really is swings and roundabouts. The latter's *Classical* Symphony works better than Gergiev's, comparably relaxed, even ponderous in the *Larghetto*, yet with a more consistent treatment of the finale. Kitaenko's coupling is the Seventh, a dark, introverted reading of a score Gergiev manipulates with a stronger hand, remaking its waltz movement into a fully fledged symphonic *scherzo*. In the Second Symphony I missed the LSO's grit whereas, in the Third and Fourth(s), it is Gergiev who fails to deliver, rushing his fences so that Prokofiev's exquisite textural detailing goes by the board. Neither Fifth is outstanding, Gergiev too pushy, Kitaenko a little pale.

In the Sixth Kitaenko is the more literal guide but his restraint does not extend to the passage in which the music collapses in on itself, evoking one of Prokofiev's hypertensive episodes with horns painfully wheezing over irregular low *pizzicato* heartbeats. As with Järvi and Rostropovich, the overall structure is paced ■ that the central slow movement emerges as the work's longest and biggest. Kitaenko also obeys, as few interpreters now do once the finale has turned unmistakably to tragedy, the *al tempo* injunction at fig 60. Hence there is no final grimace such as you find with Järvi or Gergiev.

How to sum up? The extrovert Gergiev leaves you in no doubt that smash-and-grab overstatement is ■ crucial part of the composer's armoury whereas Kitaenko, ever lucid, ■ him as a primarily elegiac figure with a very particular sound world. Järvi comes somewhere in between. We are lucky to have the choice. **David Gutman**



## Schubert • Beethoven • Berg

**Beethoven** *Fidelio* – Overture, Op 72b

**Berg** *Three Scenes from Wozzeck*

**Schubert** *Symphony No 9, 'Great', D944*

**Anneliese Kupper** sop Cologne Radio Symphony Orchestra / Erich Kleiber

Medici Masters mono © MM027-2 (76' • ADD)

Recorded live at the Funkhaus, Cologne, on

November 23, 1953, and January 7, 1956

**Heavenly Ninth and a striking Wozzeck sequence from the legendary Kleiber**



Of various surviving broadcasts featuring Erich Kleiber with the Cologne Radio Symphony Orchestra, the expertly judged Schubert Ninth issued here is perhaps the most distinctive. It's a wonderful performance, one that generously repays repeated listening. Kleiber somehow manages to combine the grandeur and humanity of Furtwängler with the drive of Toscanini, or at least he seems to. Not that this reading is in any way imitative of either maestro, just that its sum effect – acute structure-consciousness, forceful though lyrical projection, well drilled but flexible playing and with key melodies beautifully drawn – is as elevating as anything Furtwängler or Toscanini achieved in this work, at least judging by those performances that have far come down to us. Even after the passage of over some 55 years Kleiber's performance still sounds remarkably spontaneous.

The buoyant *Fidelio* Overture is taken from a compelling complete broadcast recording of the opera (with Nilsson as Leonore) that is, or has been, available elsewhere (on Koch and Capriccio); but the most interesting item, one that I had never heard before, is the Berg *Wozzeck* sequence, Kleiber having conducted the 1925 premiere of *Wozzeck* at the Berlin Staatsoper – after a total of 137 rehearsals. Kleiber's performance of these "Three Scenes" is both sensitive to detail, especially in terms of internal balancing, and, from a purely dramatic standpoint, uncompromisingly direct, with Anneliese Kupper an emotionally charged Marie. Rarely have I heard a *Wozzeck* sequence where the conductor is so entirely under the skin of the music. All in all this is a superb programme with good, well packed mono sound throughout. **Rob Cowan**

## Stanford

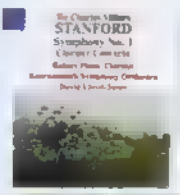
*Symphony No 1. Clarinet Concerto, Op 80*

**Robert Plane** cl Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra / David Lloyd-Jones

Naxos © S 570356 (71' • ADD)

**Early Stanford explored, while Plane offers an exceptional concerto**

This is the final recording in the Naxos series of Stanford symphonies, featuring an unusual coupling of the early (but by no means juvenile)



forward quality than the clean but slightly more distant recordings by Handley on Chandos, which, for the rather luminous chamber quality of Stanford's second and third movements (especially the solo string- and wind-writing), gives greater clarity ■ the pointillistic, almost Mendelssohnian orchestration.

As with the other three recordings, Lloyd-Jones shows a real flair for the classical architecture of Stanford's art but at the same time he responds to the underlying and inescapable passion that exudes from the scores. The first movement, though markedly slower than Handley's (11/92), retains a spaciousness and verve, while the finale has an infectious rhythmical élan reminding us of its foremost influence, Schumann's *Spring* Symphony (in the same key).

Stanford's first (though unpublished) foray into symphonic music deserves to be better known but his Clarinet Concerto, here played by Robert Plane, is frequently given ■ airing as recordings on Hyperion, ASV and Chandos attest. A fine work, in ■ continuous movement, written for Robert Mühlfeld (who never played it), it makes masterly ■ of the instrument's wide register and variety of timbres. Plane's interpretation of the composer's long lyrical lines (in particular the central *Andante*), the climactic peaks, dramatic interjections and tender *pianissimi*, are nothing short of exceptional in their careful grading; clearly, ■ his recording of Stanford's chamber works for clarinet (Naxos, A/07) demonstrates, he has ■ special affinity for this music. **Jeremy Dibble**

## Vivaldi • Tartini

**Vivaldi** *Violin Concertos, 'The Four Seasons', Op 1*

**Tartini** *Violin Sonata, 'Devil's Trill'*

**Academy of St Martin in the Fields** / Joshua Bell

Sony Classical © 88697 11013-2 (54' • DDD)

**A return to old times as Bell**

**turns in ■ fine Four Seasons**



A big-name violinist, the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, John Constable tinkling away on a ten-ton Goble – this *Seasons* is ■ bit like returning to old times.

Any Vivaldi-lover will have these iconic concertos in their collection already, probably several times over, but the merest glance at the packaging of this one will tell you that it is not aimed at them anyway – my limited-edition copy came with expensive-looking photos, ■ Joshua Bell calendar, Vivaldi's ■ printed on individual seasonally themed cards, and bonus Joshua content available from the internet via the CD.

First Symphony (1876), without an opus number, and the much later Clarinet Concerto (1903). The sound of these Naxos recordings with an on-

form BSO has a more

What is missing amid all this high-class musicianship is the inventive spark of excitement these pieces can provoke in so many players, especially through its descriptive elements. All right, not everyone has to give themselves over entirely to being dying stags, drunken peasants or barking dogs, but these performances would surely benefit from the greater rhythmic and dynamic flexibility a bit more pictorial imagining could bring. The fill-up is a thoughtful choice, however; Tartini's *Devil's Trill* Sonata, adroitly played with extra-romantic, stratospheric cadenza, as if to Bell the Devil were ne'er a foe.

**Lindsay Kemp**

## Weinberg

*Chamber Symphonies – No 1, Op 145; No 4, Op 153*

**Umeå Symphony Orchestra** / Thord Svedlund

**Alto** ■ ALC1036 (62' • DDD)

**From Olympia OCD651 (2/99)**

**Lovely, lyrical music that reveals the composer's suffering and compassion**



The treasures of the Olympia back catalogue continue to resurface, none being more welcome than this one. Weinberg pulled an interviewer's leg in 1988 when he claimed that he had started to ■ the appellation Chamber Symphony because he did not want to continue with high numbers after Symphony No 19. In fact he completed Symphony No 20 that year and would later be happy enough to label Nos 21 and 22 that way. The First Chamber Symphony – as he never let on – is simply a transcription of his Second String Quartet (composed some 50 years previously), which is ■ reason for its comparatively artless, though by no means spineless, serenade-like tone, close in places to Bartók's *Divertimento*. If the end of the first movement recalls Shostakovich's Tenth Quartet, as the late Per Skans's reprinted note plausibly observes, that is because Shostakovich – not for the first time – was actually recalling Weinberg.

The Fourth Chamber Symphony is as wistful and troubled as the First is playful and unclouded. The clarinet, for which Weinberg had composed one of the finest of his 30-odd sonatas, lends its klezmer-inspired voice – gentle at first, then ■ – to music that both seeks and offers consolation. Never one for gimmicks of the kind

to which so many of his Soviet symphonist colleagues were partial, Weinberg nevertheless adds to the score precisely four strokes for the triangle, which either the soloist or the conductor can touch in. His last completed work (Symphony No 22 remained unorchestrated) thus concludes on a gendy understated yet richly symbolic note.

Even if the performances were no better than serviceable, this would be a welcome issue. In fact they demonstrate real feeling for the lyrical, intimate nature of Weinberg's muse, and for the core of suffering and compassion that he generally kept from view, but which lends so much of his work its inner strength. **David Fanning**

## Xenakis

'Orchestral Works, Vol 5'  
Metastaseis. Pithoprakta. ST/48.  
Achorripsis. Symos. Hiketides  
Luxembourg Philharmonic Orchestra /  
Arturo Tamayo  
Timpanti © 1C1113 (60' • DDD)

**The most famous of the tough Xenakis scores, the bedrock of his future work**



It's been quite a trip ■ far, and Arturo Tamayo's cycle of Xenakis's orchestral music touches base finally with the Greek composer's most famous orchestral scores. *Metastaseis*,

*Pithoprakta* and *ST/48* were all composed between 1953 and '56, and established the intellectual and technical underpinning of everything Xenakis would achieve over the next 40 years.

*Metastaseis* found common cause between sound evolving in space and architecture, and the shape of its trademark string *glissandi* directly transmuted into the spires of the Philips Pavilion that Xenakis was developing during his day job with radical architect Le Corbusier. The reference recording is usually Maurice Le Roux's 1965 account with the Orchestre National de l'ORTF, and Tamayo's take on the piece is quicker and more streamlined. Part of me misses Le Roux's deliberateness: the woodblocks near the opening in his version rattle ominously, but Tamayo tucks them neatly into underlying string *glissandi*. But as the textures open out, he artfully shapes the contours of his chamber music-like string-writing. *Pithoprakta* rebounded out of probability theory, and Tamayo deftly portrays the polarised extremes of its gestures – swarms of multi-divided parts against isolated stabs – while never sacrificing its wildness for clarity's sake. *ST/48* was another probability-based work, now derived on computer, and this is again a prodigiously detailed account.

The history books might tell you that *Achorripsis* (1957) is ■ of Xenakis's driest creations, but Tamayo persuades otherwise. *Symos* is a hard-as-nails string piece, while *Hiketides* (1964) weaves modal melodies in between Xenakis's trademark techniques: familiar and little-heard Xenakis coming together with potent synergy. **Philip Clark**

## Back to Berlin

EMI Classics has renewed its exclusive recording contract with Sir Simon Rattle and the Berlin Philharmonic for a further five years. The first disc to be released under the new agreement ■ Ravel's *L'enfant* ■ *les sortilèges*, recorded live in concert at Berlin's Philharmonie in September, and due for international release in March 2009. "We ■ extremely pleased ■ be continuing our long and close relationship with the Berliner Philharmoniker," said EMI Classics A&R director Stephen Johns. "It is their uncompromising commitment to the highest of standards in all aspects of their music-making that makes them perhaps the finest orchestra in the world."

## Rachmaninov three

The London Symphony Orchestra under principal conductor Valery Gergiev performed Rachmaninov's three symphonies ■ London's Barbican Hall in September as part of both the orchestra's Émigré ■ and a Rachmaninov Festival weekend that also featured films and pre-concert discussions. The symphonies ■ recorded for future transmission ■ BBC Radio 3 and ■ due to be released ■ LSO Live in 2009. The performances were also filmed for ■ documentary about Gergiev and the LSO made by CNN and broadcast during October.

## Matthews's music

A new disc of works by David Matthews played by the ■ Philharmonic under Rumon Gamba is due to be released by Chandos in early 2009. The album will include *The Music of Dawn* (1989-90), the *Concerto in Azzurro* (2002) for cello and orchestra, performed by Guy Johnston, and *A Vision and a Journey*, first performed by the orchestra under Yan Pascal Tortelier ■ 1993.



Gil Shaham:  
across the pond

BOYD HAGEN



**American players take on Elgar in a thrillingly passionate performance**

## Elgar

Violin Concerto, Op 61

Gil Shaham ■

Chicago Symphony Orchestra / David Zinman

Canary Classics ■ CC06 (48' • DDD)

Recorded live at Orchestra Hall, Symphony Center, Chicago, in February 2007

Selected comparison:

Kennedy, LPO, Handley (12/85) (EMI) 345793-2

It is good to welcome an all-American performance of this most British of concertos that is so thrillingly passionate. David Zinman has said that of all concertos this is his favourite, something confirmed in the playing he draws from the Chicago Symphony, its richness as well as its characteristic polish. The detail revealed in the long *tutti* also demonstrates the care with which Zinman has prepared this performance. The recording on the Canary Classics label (personal to the soloist, Gil Shaham) is taken from live performances, and that adds to the impact, with the opulent sound matching the playing. The Chicago orchestra here is even richer than the LPO for Nigel Kennedy.

The playing of the orchestra finds a perfect counterpart in the performance of Gil Shaham, always one of the most sensitive and responsive of the high-powered violin virtuosos. Amazingly, he has performed this work some 20 times in the last 10 years. His range of tone and of dynamic is extreme, some might feel too much so, when some of his *pianissimos*, as in the second subject of the first movement, are so gentle that they can barely be heard against the orchestra. Though in that key passage he slows from the basic speed – something adopted by virtually every soloist in this work – there is nothing self-indulgent or sentimental in it, rather less so than in Kennedy's fine version with Vernon Handley conducting. Equally, Shaham's pronounced vibrato is always perfectly controlled.

The slow movement brings refinement and purity, while the main *Allegro* in the finale is fast and light, leading to a deeply dedicated account of the long accompanied cadenza. This now stands ■ one of the very finest versions of this concerto, and even though the disc, unlike most, offers no coupling, it is well worth the price. Under Soli as music director, the Chicago Orchestra produced one or two fine Elgar recordings, but the playing here is even warmer under Zinman. **Edward Greenfield**





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## London Sinfonietta

'The Jerwood Series 4'

Attwood *Iwver Tiernen*<sup>b</sup> Bailie *Five Famous*

*Adagios*<sup>c</sup> Causton *Phoenix*<sup>d</sup>. *Sleep*<sup>2c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Sebastian Bell *f*

London Sinfonietta / Nicholas Kok

London Sinfonietta © SINFCDD1-2008 (41' • DDD)

Recorded live at LSO St Luke's, London, on

<sup>b</sup>January 27, 2008 and <sup>c</sup>May 13, 2006; <sup>d</sup>at the

University of York on November 8, 2006

**Important airings for four new works in committed performances**



This fourth instalment in the London Sinfonietta's Jerwood Series brings a further selection of contrasted works from the past five years. Inspired by the volatile Mosel-

Fränkisch culture in general, and the poetry of Jean-Louis Kieffer in particular, William Attwood's *Iwver Tiernen* ("Above Towers") juxtaposes the often relentlessly active texture of its first half with the gradual accumulation of its second; thanks to Nicholas Kok's purposeful direction, there is no doubting the unity of the whole. Inhabiting more equivocal musical territory, Joanna Bailie's *Five Famous Adagios* – here adapted for string quartet – transforms five movements by Bach; the nature of the transcription being of the subtlest means each listener must decide whether the work's realisation matches its conception.

Of the two pieces by Richard Causton, *Sleep* is a brief flute solo – eloquently rendered by Sebastian Bell (in one of his last recordings), while *Phoenix* is another tale of two (though this time designated) halves in which the mythical bird's rising from its ashes is perhaps reflected in the second part being a varied and dynamic elaboration of the first; and in which the fraught opposition between piano and a quartet of wind and strings finds its eventual catharsis.

The performances here are as committed as expected, with the live ambience posing few problems in terms of recorded sound (the restless audience in the Bailie notwithstanding). Relatively short measure as usual with this series, but given the interest of the music and succinct but informative documentation, why complain?

Richard Whitehouse

## 'Baroque Guitar Concertos'

Fasch *Guitar Concerto* (arr Chiesa)

Handel *Concerto for Two Guitars*, HWV294<sup>a</sup>

(arr E Grigoryan) Vivaldi *Concerto for Two Guitars*,

RV532<sup>a</sup> (arr Malipiero). *Guitar Concertos* – RV82

(arr Pujol); RV93 (arr S Behrend) Weiss *Guitar*

*Concerto* (arr E Grigoryan after S Behrend)

Slava Grigoryan, 'Leonard Grigoryan *gtr*

Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra /

Benjamin Northey

ABC Classics © 476 5948 (71' • DDD)

**Handel is the high-point in a strangely disappointing disc**



Australian guitarist Slava Grigoryan's latest release features a selection of Baroque plucked-string concertos in arrangements by

such luminaries as Gian Francesco Malipiero, Emilio Pujol, Ruggero Chiesa and that wonderful harpsichordist-turned-classical guitarist Siegfried Behrend. In addition, Grigoryan *père* has arranged, especially for this recording, Handel's B flat Organ Concerto for two guitars; both here and in Vivaldi's RV532 Slava is joined by younger brother and regular performing partner Leonard.

In the *RV532* of the Vivaldi concertos especially, there are now so many fine period-instrument versions available on CD (my particular favourite is Rolf Lislevand on Naïve) that it's difficult to justify this type of recording unless a) you're an Angela Hewitt of the classical guitar; b) you're deliberately choosing to engage with the past by performing classic arrangements that reflect the attitudes of their times; or c) you have something really important to say about the music. The present disc doesn't fall into any of these categories.

That's not to say it isn't highly enjoyable, or that there's *RV532* the same level of intelligent musicianship that one has come to expect from Grigoryan; much of it simply sounds a little old-fashioned. One issue is the overall tempi, which are on the sluggish side; the other is a lack of variety of articulation on the part of the soloists, which makes the stylish harpsichord continuo sound rather incongruous.

However, the Handel concerto works *■* treat, the excellence of both the music and the arrangement seemingly inspiring the performers to pull out all the stops, so to speak. It's the undoubted highlight on an otherwise disappointing disc.

William Yeoman

## 'British Light Music Premieres'

Addinsell *Suite: Ring Round the Moon*<sup>c</sup>

Budd *Tricolor Overture*<sup>d</sup> Carr *Oboe Concerto*<sup>ad</sup>.

*Air for Strings*<sup>c</sup> Chagrin *Aquarelles* (Portraits of Five

Children)<sup>d</sup> G Sutherland *Clarinet Concerto*<sup>bd</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Nicholas Daniel *■* <sup>b</sup>Verity Butler *d*

<sup>c</sup>BBC Concert Orchestra / Roderick Dunk;

<sup>d</sup>Royal Ballet Sinfonia / <sup>e</sup>Gavin Sutherland,

<sup>f</sup>Barry Wordsworth

Dutton Epoch *■* CDLX7209 (80' • DDD)

**It's melody all the way in another rich addition to this lovely series**

Dutton's latest British light music collection spans several decades of musical styles. It opens brightly with Roy Budd's attractive *Tricolor*



*Overture* – composed in 1988, its original score lost, and now reconstructed from a taped recording. The collection ends with another piece

of reconstruction from sound recordings –

■ utterly delightful suite from Richard Addinsell's music for Christopher Fry's Anouilh adaptation *Ring Around the Moon*, of which only the "Invitation Waltz" had previously been recorded.

In between, Francis Chagrin's appealingly gentle *Aquarelles* also date from a half-century ago but are more forward-looking. The rest gives living composers opportunities to enjoy wider exposure for works created within the past five years. Paul Carr (b1961) is

**'If I say it's old-fashioned, that's meant to be a compliment delivered with real gratitude'**

a Cornishman who settled in Majorca to pursue composition and painting. There's something rather strident about his Oboe Concerto's first movement, but then comes a touchingly peaceful slow movement in memory of his mother and a finale of true originality. The real treasure from his pen, though, is the passionate *Air for Strings*, which deserves wider currency.

Gavin Sutherland (b1972) needs no introduction as conductor on this and many other recordings. Here he is also featured as composer of *■* Clarinet Concerto for his wife Verity Butler. If I say it's old-fashioned, that's meant to be a compliment delivered with real gratitude. It's richly melodic score, and one of great romantic charm.

The whole is expertly performed in rich sound, and is as attractive as any of the previous offerings in this enterprising series.

Andrew Lamb

## 'Sinfonias from the Enlightenment'

CPE Bach *Sinfonias* – in *■* flat major;

in E flat *WF Bach Sinfonia*, F64

Graun *Sinfonia* E flat major

Hesse *Sinfonia* in D major

Haydn *Symphony* No 39

Mozart *Symphony* No 29, K201

Moderntimes\_1800 / Ilya Korol *■*

Challenge Classics © *■* CC72193 (93' • DDD)

**A voyage of discovery through some 18th-century highways and byways**

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Hasse, Johann Gottlieb Graun (brother of the more famous Carl Heinrich) and CPE Bach. The problem is that the two works attributed to Bach's second son are

unlikely to be by him. Neither is authenticated; and while the B flat Sinfonia and the first movement of the E flat may, just, pass for CPE in uncharacteristically compliant mode, the E flat's *Larghetto* and suave minuet finale could easily be the work of his much younger half-brother, Johann Christian, so admired by Mozart. Still, whoever wrote it, the E flat Sinfonia is well worth hearing in a performance as alert and spirited as this. The *Larghetto*, with its sensuous (not a word readily associated with CPE) lines and soft bassoon colouring, even put me in mind of *Così fan tutte*.

Of the other, indisputably authentic, recorded premieres, the tiny Hasse Sinfonia – composed for the *festa teatrale Alcide al bivio* – makes up in colour and swagger what it lacks in memorable

**Whoever wrote it, the E flat Sinfonia is well worth hearing in a performance as alert and spirited as this'**

ideas, while the equally brief Graun Sinfonia contains a pleasantly doleful *Andante* in the rare key of B flat minor. Bach's troubled eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann, appears courtesy of a typically intriguing work whose edgy outer movements (as with genuine CPE, you never quite know what's coming next) enclose a pastoral *Andante* for strings and a pair of cooing flutes.

Using period instruments, *Moderntimes\_1800* (irritating name) play the fast movements with panache and terrific rhythmic energy, and understand the vein of delicate *galanterie* in the *Andantes*. The familiar symphonies on the second disc are enjoyable, too. For *Sturm und Drang* turbulence, the performance of Haydn's No 39 stands up pretty well alongside the competition, even if Pincock (Archiv) lives more dangerously in the explosive finale. In Mozart's No 29 *Moderntimes\_1800* tend to emphasise fire over lyrical grace. Other "period" performances, including, again, Pincock (Archiv) and Koopman (Apex), shape the *cantabile* melodies of the first two movements and the Minuet's Trio with more affection and allure. I could have done without the tinkling harpsichord continuo, especially in the symphony's magical opening. But there's no denying the crispness and athleticism the playing, culminating in a finale whose mingled pace and precision (thrilling swordplay for antiphonal violins) would be hard to beat.

Richard Wigmore

**Philip Glass: four decades chronicled**



BARRON CLAIRBORNE



**Plenty to reflect upon – it just leaves you wishing there was room for more**

## Glass

'Glass Box: A Nonesuch Retrospective'  
Music in Contrary Motion. Music with Changing Parts. Music in Similar Motion. Music in Twelve Parts – Parts VII-X. Mad Rush. String Quartets – No 2, 'Company'; No 4, 'Buczak'; No 5. Etudes – Nos 2, 3, 5 & 9. Symphonies Nos 3 & 8. Selections from Etoile Polaire, Dressed Like an Egg, Einstein on the Beach, Akhnaten, Satyagraha, Glassworks, the CIVIL warS, Hydrogen Jukebox, Symphony No 5 and highlights from the film soundtracks  
Various artists

Nonesuch © ■ 7559 79946-9 (11h 58' • DDD)

This eagerly anticipated Nonesuch release is not the first compilation of Glass's music: *Up Close*, released in 2006 by Glass's own label Orange Mountain Music (readily downloadable), provides a useful if selective introduction, but *Glass Box* is by far the most definitive. Across the set's 12-hour time-span, which encompasses four decades of creativity in a wide range of forms and media, one is made aware of the musical phenomenon that Glass has formalised, conceptualised and developed. Supplemented by in-depth contributions from Tim Page and Keith Potter in an impressive accompanying booklet, this particular Glass box appears nigh-on indestructible.

There are, however, a number of caveats. The chronology of Glass's oeuvre is somewhat confusingly presented. While discs 1-3 establish a straightforward timeline from 1969 to 1976, the remainder of the box is ostensibly grouped in terms of genre (solo/chamber, orchestral and

film on discs 7, 9 and 10 respectively) or not at all, such as disc 8, which veers from operatic to symphonic selections spanning 16 years. This arbitrariness nevertheless raises some interesting questions concerning interconnections in Glass's work, such as whether an operatic approach is evident in the Fifth Symphony or whether *Akhnaten* is constructed according to a symphonic design.

There will always be casualties in any collected set. *Akhnaten*, despite being subject to at least one critical study (John Richardson's *Singing Archaeology*, Wesleyan Press: 1999), is pushed rather unceremoniously to the sidelines, a decision made more perplexing by the generous space afforded to the other two stage works, which together constitute Glass's seminal trilogy of portrait operas – *Einstein on the Beach* and *Satyagraha* (at least *Akhnaten* gets a look-in, which is more than the most expensive opera in history, *The Voyage*, does). These operas, alongside excerpts from *Koyaanisqatsi*, the *CIVIL warS* and some curiosities unearthed from the Glass archives, ensure that a preponderance of pieces dating from the composer's shift from minimalism to maximalism (1976-83) are featured. This serves to under-represent early Glass – confined to three works on a single disc – and allows little room for pre-or proto-minimalist works (such as the String Quartet No 1). It also misrepresents more recent film and orchestral music by including shorter selective samples. But only a bigger box could remedy such problems. **Pwyll ■ Siân**



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# Film music

Herrmann on top form • Swashbuckling Schiffrin

## Herrmann

The Night Digger – Original Soundtrack  
Tommy Reilly barm Rosemary Green *va d'amore*  
The Sessions of London Orchestra /  
Bernard Herrmann

Label ■ ② ■■■■■ (44' • ADD)

**Here's a Herrmann worth hearing –  
right up there with Vertigo and Psycho**



*The Night Digger*, shown in the UK under the title *The Road Digger*, was a British thriller that had only a limited release in 1971, though it boasted a cast that included Jean

Anderson, Peter Sallis and Pamela Brown. Roald Dahl wrote the screenplay and his wife at the time, Patricia Neal, played the frustrated spinster who befriends a misfit, Nicholas Clay. Herrmann is on top form, clearly in sympathy with the misfit, Billy, whose theme on harmonica is heard as an independent track played by Tommy Reilly – the foremost exponent of that instrument – as well as emerging throughout the soundtrack as a benign as well as sinister presence.

Although the CD is given the label "Original Motion Picture Soundtrack", this "scenario macabre for orchestra" is more akin to a suite with seven sections ranging from four to eight minutes long. Herrmann's score grips and chills, sustaining a mood of menace often through quiet and sustained string-writing of extraordinary beauty. The lovely *viola d'amore* melody, exquisitely played by Rosemary Green, surely belongs to the Patricia Neal character.

The whole is superbly played and was recorded in "wide-screen" stereo at Barking Assembly Hall by Bob Auger. The selections featured here and authorised by the composer were passed on to John Lasher, the writer of the booklet-note. Our thanks go to him and all concerned for bringing to light an outstanding score, one that can be spoken of in the same breath as Herrmann's triptych of *Vertigo*, *North by Northwest* and *Psycho*.

Adrian Edwards



This animated take on the *Star Wars* films from producer George Lucas disappeared very swiftly from UK cinema screens during its summer release, begging that eternal

question of Hollywood sequels: why not call it a day? On the evidence of this CD, it can't be a moment too soon. There's nothing new on this soundtrack that hasn't featured in countless releases of music of this genre – except the mauling that's been inflicted on the original score by John Williams, whose name shares equal billing with Kevin Kiner. The original *Star Wars* theme, from one of the most widely loved and admired film scores of the 1970s, is ironed flat, so that the underlying syncopated rhythms that were such a feature of the original disappear under an all-purpose beat. There are 30 tracks to wade through before "Fight to the End", when the score captures some of the aspirational lift that thrilled audiences a generation ago. I understand that further sequels are planned for television, so maybe this concept will find a warmer welcome there. **Adrian Edwards**

## Schiffrin

The Four Musketeers – Original Soundtrack  
London Studio Orchestra / Lalo Schiffrin

Label ■ ② ■■■■■ (41' • ADD)

**musketeeer and a Schiffrin**

**for an unexpected**

When director Richard Lester finished *The Three Musketeers* (1973) he found himself with enough footage to create a sequel that was released the following year with Lalo Schiffrin as composer. The original soundtrack has now



Lalo Schiffrin revels in 17th-century comic swashbucklers



resurfaced, complemented by eight tracks new to disc that have been transferred from 7.5ips audition tapes provided by the composer. Schiffrin's score reminds us that he is a skilful and

versatile musician with a range extending beyond film music into the concert hall, as readers who possess Angel Romero's recording of his Guitar Concerto (EMI) will recall. Schiffrin revels in this period of history, matching old-school rococo brilliance to a new-world sensibility, as in the brass figure in the Main Theme. Although scored for a large orchestra consisting of the members of the players from London's five symphony orchestras, Schiffrin handles his forces with discretion. His scoring is light as feather down, with prominent parts for lute, guitar, flute and harpsichord. The scurrying strings in "Chased from the Louvre" convey a crisp, chilly night of furtive goings-on. Another highlight is "The Frozen Pond Fight", introduced by wind chords acting like frozen patterns on windowpanes before continuing into a spooky *scherzo*-fugue. The recording barely shows its age, although the tracks do convey a somewhat enclosed studio perspective. A most enjoyable and unexpected treat.

Adrian Edwards



## Kiner • JT Williams

Star Wars: The Clone Wars – Original Soundtrack  
City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra /  
Kevin Kiner

Sony Classical ② 88697 35995-2 (68' • DDD)

**Little left of the thrill of Williams's  
original – surely time to call it a day?**



# Chamber

Breathtaking French string quartets ■ Lucky 13 for Boulez's Berg and Mozart

## Beethoven

Complete Works for Piano Trio  
Haydn Trio Eisenstadt (Harald Kosik *pf*  
Verena Stourzh *vn* Hannes Gradwohl *vc*)  
Phoenix Edition ■ 122 (5h 5' • DDD)

## Bax

### Beethoven • Bernstein

Bax Piano Trio **Beethoven** Piano Trio No 5, 'Ghost',  
Op 70 No 1 **Bernstein** Piano Trio, Op 2  
Ensemble Avalon (Michael McHale *pf*  
Ioana Petcu-Colan *vn* Gerald Peregrine *vc*)  
RTÉ Lyric FM ■ CD116 (76' • DDD)

## Beethoven

### Brahms • Rachmaninov

**Beethoven** Piano Trio No 3, Op 1 No 3  
**Brahms** Piano Trio No 3, Op 101  
**Rachmaninov** Trio élégiaque, Op 9  
Cracovia Trio (Jerzy Tosik-Warszawiak *pf*  
Krzysztof Smietana *vn* Julian Tryczynski *vc*)  
DUX ■ DUX0626 (62' • DDD)

A Beethoven-dominated trio of trios  
but the rarities ■ worth hearing, too

Pride of place in this collection must go to the collected edition of all of Beethoven's music for piano trio from the Haydn Trio Eisenstadt. It is particularly valuable to have not just the six trios with opus numbers, the variations and the shorter works without opus numbers, but also such a rarity ■ Beethoven's own arrangement of his popular Septet, Op 20. Even though it lacks the tonal variety of the original, that last is remarkably successful, particularly when played with such enthusiasm as it is here.

Witty pointing of rhythm marks all the playing of this fine Austrian trio, though some may find the balance emphasises the way that the pianist, Harald Kosik, is plainly the leader of the ensemble. Sparkle marks all the performances, as in both the *Scherzo* and the finale of the *Archduke* Trio, the greatest of the cycle, even if the *Ghost* Trio is ■ close rival. One omission is the piano trio transcription of the Second Symphony,

though that would have been a more questionable choice than the arrangement of the Septet.

The *Ghost* Trio is offered in a competitive version from the Ensemble Avalon, an Irish group with members drawn from both north and south of the country. One criticism is that the violin and cello play with rather excessive *portamento*, though it remains an enjoyable performance. The Eisenstadt players are preferable, more cleanly recorded and with sharper focus.

The Bax Trio on that Irish disc is a rarity, a late work dating from 1946, and, unlike most of this often diffuse composer's chamber works, compact in its structure and sharp in its thematic material. The Bernstein is another attractive rarity, an early work written when he was only 19 and still dabbling with atonality. Even more compact than the Bax, it remained unpublished in the composer's lifetime and certainly deserves ■ airing also.

The disc from the Trio Cracovia brings together two well known works alongside Beethoven's C minor Trio, Op 1 No 3: Brahms's C minor Trio, Op 101, the most compact of those he wrote and with sharply memorable thematic material, and the Rachmaninov *Trio élégiaque*. A very early work, dating from 1892, it is well worth hearing. It is a slight disappointment that these performances suffer from the relative weakness of the cello, though they can still be recommended to those who fancy the coupling. **Edward Greenfield**

## Brahms

String Quartets – Op 51 No 1; Op 67  
**Takács Quartet** (Edward Dusinberre, Károly Schranz  
■ Geraldine Walther *vn* Andras Fejér *vc*)  
Hyperion ■ CDA67552 (65' • DDD)

Muscular, austere, tautly argued  
performances from a close-knit group



Viola to the fore in the third movement, *Agitato*, of Op 67; and Geraldine Walther, firm-toned and assertive, rises to the occasion as the only unmuted instrumentalist here. Agitation isn't consistently maintained though because the Takács Quartet tend to ease the tension in places. Yet there is no slack in the other movements. This close-knit group unanimously stretch or tighten the rhythm, achieving evenly matched dynamics such ■ the *sotto voce* sequences in the opening *Vivace*, the

hushed *dolce e grazioso* in the recapitulation of the *Andante* and the stilled peace of the G flat sixth variation in the finale. Walther is well in the picture in this movement too whereas elsewhere she appears occasionally to lose focus.

Nor so in Op 51 No 1. Her place on the right of the ensemble is firmly assured here. The work is "commonly held to be representative of Brahms's austerity and asceticism" (Edwin Evans), and these epithets are apposite for the Takács, spare of style and tone. The players' control over the first movement doesn't preclude a range of *rubato* – for example the third theme and the succeeding quaver passage for the first violin (1'52" to 2'22") – that serves to sharpen the musical argument. Nor does it preclude a linear drive that knits the six themes of the last movement into a coherent whole, while they do not let up on the melancholy of the middle movements, the third particularly dark. The recording is tonally credible but is widely separated. **Nalen Anthoni**

## PM Davies

Naxos Quartets – No 9; No 10  
**Maggini Quartet** (Lorraine McAslan, David Angel *vn*  
Martin Outram *va* Michal Kaznowski *vc*)  
Naxos ■ ■ ■ (64' • DDD)

A gripping final instalment  
■ Max's Naxos odyssey



Cast in six movements and dedicated to Mancunian mathematician and politician Dame Kathleen Ollerenshaw, the Ninth in Sir Peter Maxwell Davies's cycle of 10 Naxos Quartets is a 36-minute canvas of formidable rigour and accomplishment, positively Beethovenian in its fearless ambition, questing spirit and unrelenting concentration. The first two movements – a pugnacious *Allegro* and no less absorbing *Largo flessibile* – grow from the same seed and incorporate some frequently violent contrasts that hark back to childhood memories of war. The composer writes in the booklet of "the popular music of the 1940s, whose contours and rhythms are echoed, as are also the raw sounds of wartime Manchester that I heard as a small boy and associated with that music – air-raid sirens, the 'glissandi' of falling bombs, the tearing apart of crashing buildings – but all re-interpreted, sublimated and disciplined within terms of the string quartet". Next come three shorter movements with a strongly burlesque flavour ("almost ■ independent miniature

IN THE  
STUDIO

quartet within a quartet") followed by a taut and driven finale.

Taking its ■ from the Baroque suite but employing Scottish dance forms, the Tenth wears a more reflective demeanour, its emotional kernel comprising a central *Adagio flessibile*, which boasts some of the most probingly sincere inspiration in the whole series. The fifth and final movement suddenly stops in mid air – a deliberately inconclusive gesture. "I needed to leave the door open," explains the composer. "I had enjoyed writing the Naxos Quartets so much, and perhaps even learned a thing or two, that more could, in theory, eventually flourish."

The Maggini perform with the no-holds-barred commitment and jaw-dropping technical acumen we have come to expect from them throughout this massive project. Splendidly rich sound and a most truthful balance, too. Apparently, Rubbra and Jacob are next in line for the Maggini treatment – and I for one can hardly wait.

Andrew Achenbach

## Grieg

Cello Sonata, Op 36. Intermezzo, CW118. Lyric Pieces – Book 1, Op 12: No 1, Arietta; Book 3, Op 43: No 4, Little Bird; No 5, Erotic; Book 5, Op 54: No 2, Norwegian March; No 3, March of the Trolls; Book 6, Op 57: No 1, Vanished Days; No 4, Secret; No 6, Homesickness; Book 7, Op 62: No 5, Phantom; Book 9, Op 68: No 3, At Your Feet; Book 10, Op 71: No 7, Remembrances. Allegretto  
Emmanuelle Bertrand & Pascal Amoyel pf  
Harmonia Mundi ■ HMC90 1986 (75' • DDD)

**Grieg sounds good transcribed for the cello, and his Sonata adds substance**



The talented duo of Emmanuelle Bertrand and Pascal Amoyel, who have made a number of impressive recordings for this label, here bring together Grieg's only cello sonata with a collection of transcriptions from his many piano pieces, none of which outshines the composer's originals. None the less, it makes an attractive disc, well played and recorded ■ it is. The cello is very much less prominent than the piano, but that only reflects the actual volume of the instruments, and the fine performances compensate for any problems over balance.

The first movement of the Sonata brings high dynamic contrasts, adding to the dramatic impact, but it is the *Andante molto tranquillo* slow movement which is the gem of the work, unmistakably typical of the composer in its beautiful melody, leading on to a dance finale that might have been written for Grieg's *Peer Gynt* music. It might have been more fruitful to have another cello sonata by another composer for coupling, rather than the cello transcriptions, but the disc can safely be recommended to anyone fancying the programme.

Edward Greenfield

Gypsy violin  
à la Française

Back in August, violinist Philippe Graffin and pianist Claire Désert recorded the CD "Hungarian Dances" for Onyx. Inspired by Jessica Duchon's novel of the same name about ■ wandering gypsy violinist, the disc includes works by Brahms, Dohnányi, Kreisler, Monti, Liszt (including *Mephisto Waltz* No 1 arranged by Milstein for solo violin), Hubay, Bartók, Debussy, Hartmann, Vecsey and Scarlataescu. In Bartók's *Five Duos* for two violins Graffin is partnered by Tom Eisner, and for Brahms's *Hymn in Honour of the Great Joachim* he's joined by violinist Hebe Mensinga and double bassist Szymon Marciniak. The disc is due for release before Christmas

Seven Last Words  
in sound and vision

The Navarra Quartet – violinists Xander Van Vliet and Marije Ploemacher, viola-player Simone ■ der Giessen and cellist Nathaniel Boyd – are to record Haydn's *Seven Last Words of Christ* ■ the *Cross in January* ■ for Altara. The 2007 Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship winners will ■ receive Trust funding for ■ short film of interviews and live performances that incorporate a backdrop projection of paintings by Australian-born artist Jamie Boyd, inspired by Haydn's music

## Mozart

## à la Müllejans

Violinist Petra Müllejans, leader of the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra, teamed with South African fortepianist Kristian Bezuidenhout in June to record a disc of Mozart violin sonatas for Harmonia Mundi USA at Lynchurst Hall's Air Studios ■ London. The pair – who enjoy ■ fruitful working partnership – will tour in collaboration with the Boston Early Music Festival to coincide with the CD's release ■ spring 2009.

## CHOICE



Angela Hewitt and Daniel Müller-Schott: bright and colourful

EVA MAIERHOFER & URSCH WOLF



**Beethoven acquires a dapper dress sense in these sculpted performances**

## Beethoven

Cello Sonatas – No 1, Op 5 No 1; No 2, Op 5 No 2; No 3, Op 69  
Daniel Müller-Schott & Angela Hewitt pf  
Hyperion ■ CDA67633 (78' • DDD)



Daniel Müller-Schott and Angela Hewitt give Beethoven's first three cello sonatas a nimble and colourful outing. Their musical "dress" sense is immaculate, with never so much as a quaver out of place, no hint of ungainliness or aggression and a cultivated sound world which, whether presented singly or in duet, is consistently smooth. Their duo engagement is compelling and their repertoire of gestures – vivid dynamics, tiny instances of expressive *rubato* (especially from Hewitt), suspended breathing (ie towards the close of the G minor Second Sonata's opening *Adagio*) and so on – is exceedingly broad. Sometimes I wondered whether the reverie was being overplayed, such as the little pause for thought at 13'25" into the first movement of the F major First Sonata. At the opening of the A major Third Sonata's brief *Adagio* third movement Hewitt's dreamily sculpted phrasing verges on sounding Chopinesque, though poetic in effect and poignantly responded to by Müller-Schott.

These performances are full of interesting ideas: there's rarely a bar without ■ subtle bend somewhere along the line and yet the various *allegros* are sparky in the best sense of the term, rhythmically crisp and alert, especially the rondo finale of the G minor Sonata, which is deliciously pointed by Hewitt. Those in search of a more overtly masculine approach to Beethoven would probably be better off with the classic sets by Rostropovich and Richter

(Philips, 1/85<sup>R</sup>) or Fournier and Gulda (6/93<sup>R</sup>). Then again I've always thought András Schiff and Miklós Perényi (ECM, 12/04) or Antonio Meneses and Menahem Pressler (Avie, 8/08) strike ■ nice balance between formality and fantasy. But Müller-Schott and Hewitt provide ■ bright, decorative antidote to their ■ austere rivals. The recorded sound is beautifully balanced. Rob Cowan

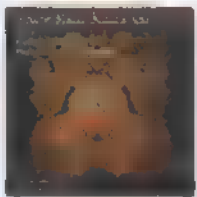
**'There's rarely ■ bar without a subtle bend somewhere along the line'**



**Kalliwoda • Rolla • Spohr**

Kalliwoda Duet, Op 208 No 1 Rolla Duo concertant, Op 4 No 2 Spohr Duo, Op 13  
Vaughan Jones *vs* Reiad Chibah *vs*  
Manor House Music © 634479 821004 (61' • DDD)

**Brave and impressive performances make a case for unfamiliar works**



I'm pleased that more and more of the music of the violinist/composers of the Classical and Romantic periods is becoming available. All three of these composers show

impressive expertise in writing for the apparently thin medium of the string duo – Rolla in the way he composes a dialogue between the two contrasting voices, each using its full range, Spohr in the elegance and expressive quality he imparts to each line, and Kalliwoda, writing in a lighter, less demanding idiom, producing a surprising range of textures through his lavish, idiomatic use of double-stopping.

The performances, too, are impressive on a technical level (a few moments of slightly disturbing intonation apart), but there's something missing. Recorded sound with a more generous ambience would have allowed the players to bring out the music's poetic qualities more persuasively, but this isn't the whole story. Jones and Chibah do make us feel they're enjoying playing the music, but they could have gone much further in finding the perfect tone-colour for each episode, or in searching for exactly the right articulation and emphasis in order to bring out the character of a particular phrase. To take one example: a freer, more confident performance of the Kalliwoda *Scherzo* would have given us a stronger impression of the music's wit and sense of fun. Unfamiliar music that's not, perhaps, quite of the front rank has particular need of such interpretative care.

Duncan Druce

**Lachenmann**

String Quartets – No 2, 'Reigen seliger Geister', No 3, 'Grido', *Gran Torso*  
Arditti Quartet (Irvine Arditti, Ashot Sarkissian *vs* Ralf Ehlers *vs* Lucas Fels *vs*)  
Kalros © 0012662KAI (75' • DDD)

**Listening to the haunted improviser ■ be stimulating and rewarding**



I was interested to read improvising trombonist Radu Malfatti writing on the music of Helmut Lachenmann, hitherto one of a handful of composers of genuine interest to the

improvised music community, in less than glowing terms recently. "His pieces are hopelessly old-fashioned," he said. "The forms tumble around in 19th-century idiomatics: with

all his beautiful sounds, I hear rondos, climaxes and anti-climaxes."

If improvising musicians have seemingly distilled Lachenmann and moved on, then in the classical world his reputation as an iconoclastic denier of tradition stubbornly persists. But Malfatti is right to place Lachenmann squarely within the Austro-German tradition: as this complete quartet cycle shows, every gesture and structure is the result of a composer haunted by a tradition that fragmented within the 20th century.

But his rationale is to re-energise that debris with a new inner dynamic and if the title of his first string quartet (1971-72), *Gran Torso*, resonates with echoes of Beethoven's *Grave Fugue*, that's no coincidence. In place of the formality of a fugue, Lachenmann's torso implies the death of lazy convention. The music begins with hushed sonorities perched on the edge of audibility, produced by rarefied non-standard string techniques. It's a common misunderstanding to label these sounds as "noise", but Lachenmann's techniques provoke an exacting sonic response, and his "noises" develop with minute changes of fingerings and bowings. This is the sort of music the Ardittis play best, and the profound sense of a composer upping the ante as he continues into his second and third quartets is intellectually and spiritually rewarding. **Phillip Clark**

**Martinů • Eben • Sluka**

Eben Suitsa balladica Martinů Cello Sonata No 3, H340. Variations on a Slovak Folksong, H378  
Sluka Cello Sonata  
Tomáš Jamník *vs* Ivo Kahánek *pf*  
Supraphon © SU3947-2 (69' • DDD)

Sonata No 3 – selected comparison:  
Zappa, Mainolfi (A/O8) (CLAV) 50-2803  
Variations – selected comparison:  
Blaumane, Katsnelson (A/O8) (QUAR) QTZ2057

**Czech cello music of the 1950s showcased in engaging performances**



Although not the longest work ■ offer here, pride of place goes to the earliest of them, Martinů's Third Sonata (1952). Opening with a simple, tranquil chord sequence on the piano from which the first movement is then generated, if taken too quickly – as Mainolfi did on Claves – the movement loses much of its essential character. Thankfully, Kahánek judges it very nicely (maybe ■ touch slow) but from it he and Jamník deliver a beautifully judged ■ of this entire sunlit sonata. Raphael Sommer and Daniel Adni, however, on a privately issued disc from the Raphael Sommer Trust and Dvořák Society, remain the benchmark.

Petr Eben was interned as a child by the Nazis and his four-movement *Suitsa balladica* (1955) is touched by wartime reminiscence. The

juxtaposition of dance-like vivacity with shadows of the past is unsettling in the first two movements but not overly profound and the third, an Elegy, is wistful rather than tragic with the final Toccata (portraying the "dynamism of the human spirit") energetic without being uplifting. Luboš Sluka's Cello Sonata (1956) is abstract despite its unconventional two-movement format of preludial *Andante sostenuto* followed by a compound-form finale that is a sonata in miniature. Sluka's best-known piece, it lacks the breadth of the Martinů and Eben's lyricism, yet the composer has arranged it several times, including for bass clarinet (3/00) and bassoon.

The playing throughout is very decent as typified by their by turns lyrical and vigorous performance of Martinů's *Variations on a Slovak Folksong* (1959), easily matching the recent account by Blaumane and Katsnelson. Supraphon's sound is nicely balanced in a warm acoustic. **Guy Rickards**

**'Hands on Heart'**

Bartók Rhapsody No 1, Sz87  
Fauré Après un rêve, Op 78 No 1  
Glazunov Chant du ménestrel, Op 71  
Kodály Solo Cello Sonata, Op 8  
Paganini Introduction and Variations on 'Dal tuo stellato soglio' from Rossini's 'Mosé in Egitto', MS23 Op 24  
Piazzolla Le Grand Tango  
Rachmaninov Sing not to me, beautiful maiden, Op 4 No 4 Rimsky-Korsakov The Tale of Tsar Saltan – Flight of the bumble-bee  
Tim Hugh *vs* Olga Sitkovetsky *pf*  
Naim © NAIMCD118 (72' • DDD)  
Recorded live at Wigmore Hall, London, in November 2007

**An emotional occasion brings intensity but it's a wonderful evening, too**



This recital was designed as a tribute to Tim Hugh's brother Steve, who died in 2005 in his mid-forties. A special occasion, then, and we can hear this in playing of unusual intensity and

commitment. It's easy to imagine being in the audience, experiencing the event as it unfolds, and if there are a few of the minor blemishes inseparable from live recording they're of no significance. Hugh performs the major work, the

**'He's most imaginative in using variation in tone colour and rhythmic style to evoke different aspects of folk culture'**

Kodály, with tremendous passion and verve, and he's most imaginative in using variation in tone colour and rhythmic style to evoke different aspects of folk culture. The way the music recedes into the distance at the end of the

second movement is magical, and in the finale the portrayal of the different folk-dance idioms, contrasting with the scary music ■ the centre of the movement, is truly compelling.

Another exceptional performance comes with the Rachmaninov song transcription – Hugh judges perfectly the changes from declamatory to lyrical style, and Olga Sitkovetsky completes the picture with subtle *rubato* and fine expressive touch. I also very much enjoyed the Piazzolla; in its outer sections the distinctive dark energy is suitably highlighted by Hugh's intense tone and decisive accents, and there's a wonderful jazz-like piano break near the end. However, all the items are splendidly played – y ■ may well have different favourites. The sound quality and balance of Tony Faulkner's recording are exemplary, and audible audience participation is limited almost entirely to enthusiastic applause. I felt like joining in! **Duncan Druce**

## 'O'Reilly Street'

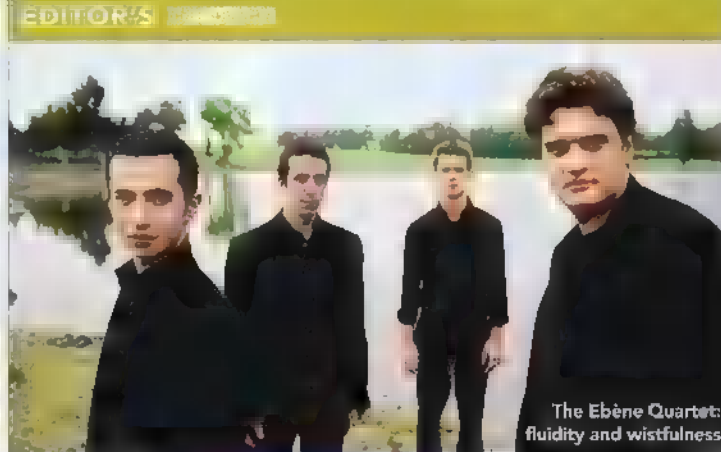
**Bach** Orchestral Suite No 2, BWV1067 – Badinerie (arr Gomez) **Bolling** Suite for Flute and Jazz Piano. Espiegle. General O'Reilly (all arr Gomez) **Gomez** 'Tica-Tica. Soncito. Contradanza **James Galway** fl **Tiempo Libre** (Jorge Gomez p/Leandro González perc Tebelio Fonte bgr/Hilario Bell drmk) **RCA** ■ **Seal** © 88697 32163-2 (48' • DDD) **Spirited playing by the famous flautist; the music leaves less of an impression**



French jazz pianist and composer Claude Bolling wrote his jazz/Baroque crossover Suite for Flute and Jazz Piano for Jean-Pierre Rampal in 1975. On this CD,

James Galway is the star performer and his pianist partner, Jorge Gomez, is a comparable virtuoso. The music itself, if not indelible, is lively, inventive and inhabits an area constantly crossing over between concert music and jazz rhythms, which are at times fairly complex in detail. Of the Suite, the perky opening "Fugace" is the most catchy, wittiest piece, the second number, "Baroque and Blue" makes its contrasts tellingly, and the third, "Irlandaise" is gently folksy. The fourth movement, "Veloce", is also effective in its sparkling bravura, while elsewhere there are some neat lyrical touches, although James Galway overdoes the vibrato in the closing "Affectueuse". The other music in the programme – by Jorge Gomez – has stronger Latin-American influences, notably *Tica-Tica*, but to my ears it is much less appealing. Gomez's closing "jazz" arrangement of the famous Bach "Badinerie", not surprisingly, adds nothing worthwhile to the original. In short, although Galway's flute-playing is delectably spirited throughout, this is not a collection I would wish to return to very often. It is well if forwardly recorded.

**Ivan March**



The Ebène Quartet: fluidity and wistfulness

Ravel Debussy • Pierre quatuor ebène



Debussy Ravel quatuor ebène



Their almost palpable sense of wonder means the Ebènes win hands down

## Debussy • Fauré • Ravel

**Debussy** String Quartet, Op 10 **Fauré** String Quartet, Op 121 **Ravel** String Quartet **Quatuor Ebène** (Pierre Colombet, Gabriel Le Magadure vns Mathieu Herzog va Raphaël Merlin vc) **Virgin Classics** © 519045-2 (80' • DDD)



## Debussy • Ravel

**Debussy** String Quartet, Op 10 **Ravel** String Quartet **Australian Quartet** (Sophie Rowell, Anne Horton vns Sally Boud va Rachel Johnston vc) **ABC Classics** ■ 476 6904 (55' • DDD)

Among the many breathtaking moments on the Ebène Quartet's CD, there is one in particular that I kept returning to. It occurs at around 1'14" into the Ravel's slow movement, the second set, which enters like a bittersweet memory before a literal recollection of the Quartet's opening motif. Other subtle details of interpretation include the chord at 2'03" that underpins a transformation of the first subject before the same chord leads directly into the second subject – and when it does, utterly changing in character, turning warmer, more openly inviting. The ebb and flow of the passage at 5'29" where the second subject rides above ■ arpeggiated accompaniment, music that looks both forwards to Debussy's own *La mer* and backwards to Rimsky's *Scheherazade* (or so it seems). There's a fluidity to the Ebène's playing of both works that suits the music's character, a mood of wistfulness too that the Ravel especially benefits from. This improvisatory approach is hardly surprising from ■ ensemble that is also celebrated for its jazz performances.

It was a brilliant idea to include Fauré's late Quartet which, in ■ sense, provides the linchpin for all three works, the Ravel having been composed in Fauré's class to mark the 10th anniversary of Debussy's quartet, and which is dedicated to Fauré. An extraordinary work by any standards, ethereal and other-worldly with themes that seem constantly to be drawn skywards, Fauré's Quartet responds well to the Ebène's sensitised approach.

I can't imagine that anyone requiring this particular trio of works will be disappointed, which makes the various pairings of the Ravel and Debussy quartets on their own seem somewhat less enticing. One such coupling arrives on the ABC label from the Australian Quartet. Their Debussy/Ravel is lustrous, earnest, energetic and warm-hearted. But Quatuor Ebène scores highest for an almost palpable sense of wonder, an impression that the Australians, for all their proficiency, don't quite match. **Rob Cowan**

## INTERVIEW

### Pierre Colombet, Quatuor Ebène's leader

Recording the Ravel Quartet is something ■ have wanted to do since forming Quatuor Ebène nine years ago. It is the first piece that ■ played together and means a lot to ■. For this reason we decided to ■ for as long as possible because ■ wanted the performance to be perfect. Of course when we ■ to record it we realised this ■ impossible because every day ■ performed it differently. On the other hand the Debussy ■ a very fresh work for us – we had been playing it for only six months before the recording took place.

The Fauré ■ ■ difficult work for three of us ■ understand ■ the beginning. Our cellist, Raphaël Merlin, urged us to listen to it because he thought it was a wonderful piece. We practised it a lot and played ■ in concert many times, but ■ weren't quite satisfied with the result because we couldn't understand its objective. So ■ stopped playing it for several months and when we picked ■ up again suddenly ■ was as if a light had been turned ■ and ■ became something magical. Now it is ■ of our favourite quartets.

As ■ ensemble we try ■ be as broad in ■ repertoire choices ■ possible. Genres like pop and jazz are often overlooked by the classical world because classical music is ■ intelligent, but when other musical genres ■ played really well they can also reveal treasures. This ■ why it is important for us to play jazz and other styles of music for ■ classical audience – because it introduces them ■ something ■ – and equally jazz and pop audiences can discover that classical instruments are capable of different sounds.

Our jazz-playing also helps to inform ■ classical performance. It enables ■ to look ■ the ■ from ■ different perspective and to see classical music as a kind of improvisation. We like to be as free ■ possible in our performance and for every concert to be slightly different.

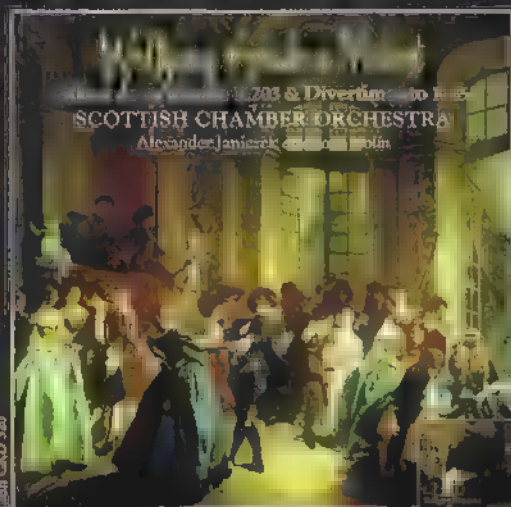
**Interview by Charlotte Smith**



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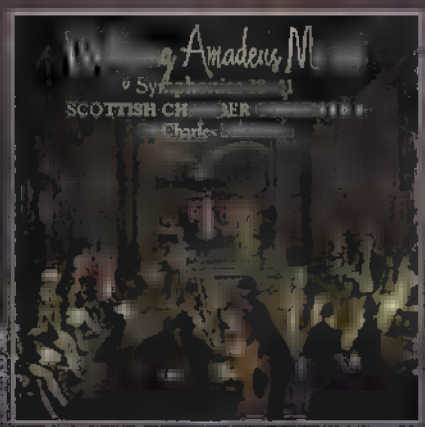
# Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart from the Scottish Chamber Orchestra

Fullerda Serenade 203 & Divertimento 204  
Alexander Janiczek director / violin



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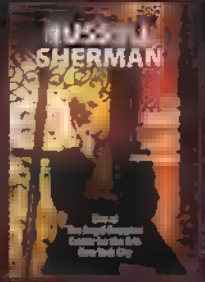
"a song more  
for remembrance

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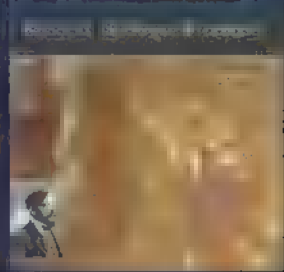
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Two works for 13 winds (and guests) make a surprising, ravishing Viennese coupling

## Berg • Mozart

Berg Chamber Concerto\*

Mozart Serenade, 'Gran partita', K361

\*Christian Tetzlaff *vn* Mitsuko Uchida *pf*

Ensemble Intercontemporain / Pierre Boulez

Decca © ■■■ 0316DH (80') • DDD

Lucky number 13: Boulez has come up with a characteristically inventive pairing of Mozart's great wind serenade with Berg's Chamber Concerto. OK, he's cheated slightly, in that Mozart's original stipulation was for a double bass rather than a contrabassoon (though it's a common enough substitution), and the wind instruments used by Berg and Mozart are not identical. But conceptually it's a winner; and musically too, with Old Vienna coming face to face with its more turbulent post-First World War self.

Though the origins of Mozart's *Gran Partita* are not entirely clear, it may well have been written for a benefit concert for Anton Stadler in Vienna's Burgtheater on March 23, 1784, at which, it was advertised, "among other well-chosen pieces [will be] ■ great wind piece of a very special kind composed by Herr Mozart". He didn't disappoint, coming up with a work that demanded, in addition ■ the standard wind octet, two more horns, two basset horns and the aforementioned double bass.

The sheer scale of the work, too, suggests that this was an august occasion. Within its seven movements, Mozart deftly moves between the worlds of the military band, traditional *Harmoni Musik* and, of course, opera, both *seria* and *buffa*. The (sadly uncredited) members of Ensemble Intercontemporain clearly relish the opportunity to venture into earlier territory, and the playing, as you'd expect, is supremely accomplished and in perfect accord. But much more than that, there's a ■■■ of fun, of genial affection for the music. Whether in the fluid lines of the tender *Adagio* or the yearning *Andante*, or in the bustling, concise finale, where everything – in the true spirit of *opera buffa* – seems to



■ right, Boulez makes plain his relish for the work. This serenade, he reminds us, is ■ much more than merely an attractive backdrop for the goings-on of Viennese life.

Berg's Chamber Concerto was also written for ■ auspicious event – the 50th birthday of his friend and mentor Arnold Schoenberg. So often Berg's music was inspired by human relationships (like that of Schumann, with whom he shares much), and nowhere more explicitly than in this piece, where themes constructed out of the names of Schönberg, Anton Webern and

**'Mozart's Gran partita is so much more than merely an attractive backdrop for the goings-on of Viennese life'**

the composer himself become the very fabric of the musical material, as ■ to signify the indelibility of the trio. He later wrote of "how much friendship, love and ■ world of human and spiritual relationships I have smuggled into these three movements".

It's a work that has endlessly fascinated theorists, not just for Berg's very particular way of using Schoenberg's serial methods, but also for his obsessive interest in numerology, which is touched on with great lucidity by Boulez in the booklet. But although it's useful for the performers to be able to dissect the piece in such a manner, for the listener it is hardly any more essential than ■ in-depth knowledge of fugal techniques is for the enjoyment of late Beethoven quartets. Boulez has been here before,

of course, memorably recording the concerto with Barenboim and Zukerman, and he knows his way round the piece's stickier points and its occasionally intransigently dense wind textures. But what makes Mitsuko Uchida and Christian Tetzlaff outstanding is their feeling for the piece's inherent theatricality. Berg gave his soloists a movement apiece (both having very brief interjections into the other's movement), and Uchida brings to the opening variation set a breathtaking rhapsody, whether in the beguiling waltz of the second variation, the steely clusters of the third or the playful wit of the fifth – a canon in which she plays catch-up with the ensemble, Berg building to a dizzying climax that deliberately overshadows the whispered entrance of the violin for the *Adagio*.

Though the Violin Concerto was still more than a decade away, its solo writing is anticipated not only in the way Berg exploits the violin's entire range ■ searing effect but in the figuration itself, as he carves a song out of great weeping lines. The writing for wind instruments is hardly less original, whether in sustained, organ-like chords or the extreme sonorities at the end of the movement, where textures are sunk ■ low as can be against a heaven-bound violin. Finally the soloists come face ■ face for the *Rondo ritmico*, which begins with ■ swirling cadenza. The freedom of the two players here is extraordinary, undoubtedly helped by the fact that they toured the work before taking it into the studio.

The real achievement here is that most people will buy the disc for either the Mozart or the Berg, ■ both. But in listening to it, they'll discover something new and utterly remarkable. Lucky 13 indeed. **Harriet Smith**



INS84/IND84

# French airs and graces

The 20th-century French sonata is the focus of ■ clutch of ■■ discs, as Guy Rickards discovers



TULLY POTTER COLLECTION

Alongside Nielsen's five projected wind concertos, Debussy's ■■ sonatas constitute one of 20th-century music's great lost opportunities. Only three were finished, one for violin (1915), one for cello (1917) – both with piano accompaniment – and the



sublime Sonata for flute, viola and harp (1915), all of which appear ■■ Saphir release ■■ performances of beautiful poise. Perhaps the opening Pastorale of the flute, viola and harp Sonata, featuring Jean-Pierre Rampal, is a touch too languid, but the revelation ■■ the Cello Sonata, played by Roland Pidoux, evoking from afar the orchestral Images with their resonances of England, Spain and France. The Violin Sonata, previously my least favourite, emerges ■■ a stronger piece than I recalled. The main drawback of Saphir's nicely produced disc is the poor

playing-time of just over 42 minutes.

Debussy's "trio" Sonata ■■ the climax and focus of a Telarc disc comparing and contrasting his music and Takemitsu's, performed by flautist Joshua Smith and harpist Yolanda Kondonassiss. Their intelligent programme features pieces for unaccompanied flute (*Syrinx* and the title-track, *Air*), for flute, harp and viola (the Sonata plus *And Then I Knew 'Twas Wind*) and for harp and strings (*Dances* ■■ ■■ profane and *Towards the Sea II*, which also features ■■ alto flute). If the Frenchman's influence on Takemitsu is underlined by the similar



scorings, it is clear how differently radical their methods were beneath the surface. Delight ■■ beauty of sonority is the common denominator, making for an enchanting disc, beautifully recorded in an opulently spacious acoustic.

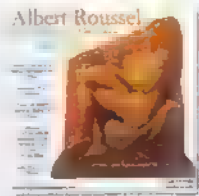
Flute and piano dominate a new Cube-Bohemia disc of French and Czech music by the Prague-based Ensemble Martinů. Debussy is absent, but the French cause ■■ served by two quietly enchanting interludes for flute, violin and piano by ■■ bert (1949;



the disc lists flute ■■ only but violinist Radka Preislerová is an audibly essential trio member), the pallid *Quatuor Pour presque tous les temps*, Op 134, by Florent Schmitt and Henri Mouton's nifty arrangement of Ravel's *Ma Mère l'Oye* Suite for flute, cello and piano. Aside from Martinů's deliciously spicy *Promenades* for flute, violin and piano, the Czech pieces are real rarities: Ivan Kuriz's *A Song from Brittany* (2003) and *A Little Stone Dance* (1993) by Václav Riedelbauch, brother of the ensemble's founder. Delightful flute-playing from the ensemble

leader; Miroslav Matějka, enlivens Ravel's famous "Laidronette" with ■■ captivating chinoiserie, but the performances from Preislerová, cellist Bledar Zajmi and pianist Markéta Janáčková are all strong. The sound is fair, allowing the instruments breathing space yet providing an intimacy that makes Telarc's sound for Kondonassiss and Smith cavernous by comparison.

Roussel was ■■ early – and adept – Impressionist, as Saphir's release of his complete works for flute reveals. Mathieu Dufour plays most items, including *Joueurs de flûte* (1924), evoking the great flute-players ■■ myth (Pan, Tityre and Krishna) and literature (Monsieur de ■■ Péjaudie from de Regnier's *La Pêcheresse*); the tiny *Aria* (1928, an arrangement of



the second *Vocalise*) and *Andante et Scherzo* (1934), both accompanied ably by Adrienne Krausz; the *Sérénade* (1925) for quintet, and the *Trio in F* (1929), with Trio Joachim and harpist Julie Palloc. Michel Moraguès partners Sandrine Piau ■■ the beautiful *Ronsard Poems* for flute and voice (1924), joins his ■■ quintet – with pianist Claire Désert – in the vivacious early *Divertissement* (1906) and partners the Castagnieri Quartet in Roussel's last completed work, four pleasant but variable pieces for the radio play *Elpénor* (1937). Recorded 1999–2001, the performances and sound ■■ good if not exceptional.

The ■■ might ■■ said of Poulenc's five sonatas. Although not conceived ■■ coherent group like Debussy's it is surprising that – ■■ near 80 minutes – they are not programmed as a set more often. Their commonalities of design and expression are most notable in that four are memorials to eminent friends and colleagues and the fifth, the Cello Sonata (1940–48) – played by Pidoux – owed its completion to

Fournier's determined encouragement. Moraguès's breezy reading of the Flute Sonata (1956–57, in memoriam Elizabeth Sprague-Coolidge), with its ■■ of *Dialogues des Carmélites* and *Concert champêtre*, precedes the turbulent Violin Sonata, inspired by Ginette Neveu but ■■ Lorca's



memory (1942–43, rev 1949); Régis Pasquier catches the music's angry subtext. Despite Eli Eban's enthusiastic advocacy, the Clarinet Sonata (1962, in memoriam Honegger) rarely matches such accomplishment, unlike the Oboe Sonata (also 1962), dedicated ■■ Prokofiev's memory and played nimbly by François Meyer. With pianist Emile Naoumoff matching his colleagues' virtuosity, this is the best-performed and best-recorded disc reviewed here, the top-notch sound a credit to pianist-producer Nikolaos Samaltanos.

Oboist Bengt Rosengren closes his CD "Conversations" with the Poulenc, accompanied by Matti Hirvonen. They're marginally quicker than Meyer and Naoumoff. Dubois's *Variations* (1963) is also dedicated to Prokofiev's memory, and in ■■ Gavotte flirts with ■■ Classical Symphony. French composers provide the core of some variable repertoire, while Tomasi's unaccompanied *Evocations* (1967)



juxtaposes Peruvian, Nigerian, Cambodian and Scottish music in four compact spans. Most exotic of all is Makoto Shinohara's *Obsession* (1960). Mostly Rosengren – whose virtuosity is undermined by his instrument's distractingly percussive action – was partnered by the late Kerstin Nylander, who died tragically aged 50 ■■ spring 2007. The disc is dedicated to her memory.

Like Roussel, Jean Cras pursued a naval career. Michel Fleury's gushing booklet-note obsesses over the claim that the self-taught Cras's technique was superior to professionally trained composers but fails to note that his music often lacks that most essential quality for immortality: a distinctive voice. Thus the likeable early Cello Sonata (1901), which ■■ rather too long, and the briefer but anonymous *Largo* ■■ F sharp minor for cello and piano fail to compel. The Piano Trio (1907), however, is a much more impressive affair, its four movements ■■ model of balance. It should become far better known through this splendid performance. Timpani's sound is close and clear. ■■



## The Recordings

- **Debussy** Sonatas Various artists  
Saphir © LVC001008 (DDD • 42)
- **Debussy**, Takemitsu 'Air' Kondonassiss, Smith et ■■  
Telarc © CD80694 (DDD • 60)
- **Various** Cpars 'Rendez-vous' Ens Martinů  
Cube-Bohemia © CBCD2734 (DDD • 59)
- **Roussel** Cpte Wks for ■■ Dufour, Moraguès et al  
Saphir © LVC001017 (DDD • 74)
- **Poulenc** Sonatas Various artists  
Saphir © LVC001040 (DDD • 78)
- **Various** Cpars 'Conversations' Rosengren, Nylander  
Daphne © DAPHNE1030 (DDD • 68)
- **Cras** Chbr Wks Khramouchin, Jacquon  
Timpani © 1C1151 (DDD • 71)



# Instrumental

Cashell cuts a dash • More Beethoven from Brautigam • Royal Mayerl from De'Ath

## Beethoven

'The Piano Sonatas, Vol 7'

Piano Sonatas – No 27, Op 90; No 28, Op 101;  
No 29, 'Hammerklavier', Op 106

András Schiff pf

ECM New Series © 476 6189 (77' • DDD)

Recorded live ■ the Tonhalle, Zürich

## Beethoven

'The Piano Sonatas, Vol 8'

Piano Sonatas – No 30, Op 109; No 31, Op 110;  
No 32, Op 111

András Schiff pf

ECM New Series © 476 6192 (65' • DDD)

**Schiff completes his cycle with playing  
■ provocative and imaginative as ■■**



Imagine a fortepiano's clipped, biting quality of note attacks, acute timbral distinctions between registers and widely varying resonances available from the sustain pedal. Fortify these attributes with the modern concert grand's lung-power and potential for large-scale projection, and you've got the essence of András Schiff's

Beethoven cycle, which remains ■ provocative as ever throughout its final two instalments.

If you've followed the cycle to date, you'll notice that Schiff's fondness for breaking of hands is more pronounced this time around. Sometimes the effect magnifies felicities of voice-leading or expression; other times it comes off as arch and mannered. In Op 90 the pianist brings out the first movement's underlying disquiet through sharply defined dynamic contrasts, hyper-articulated distinctions between *legato* and detached phrasing, and daringly blurred pedallings (the taxing left-hand rotary patterns). The left hand's often smoothed-out melodic interest emerges centre-stage as ■ foil to the slightly overphrased right-hand material in the finale.

Schiff's variegated touch and tonal control impress in Op 101's first movement, yet he sidesteps the second-movement march's obsessive ferocity. He is fastidious in the fugal finale at the expense of forward momentum. This comment also applies to the *Hammerklavier's* challenging outer movements, although Schiff's detailed inflections leave none of the oddball gestures of the little *Scherzo* unscrutinised. The

easy ebb and flow of his intimately scaled *Adagio sostenuto* belies its relatively short playing-time.

Schiff's strengths and quirks make their marks throughout the last three sonatas. He plays Op 109 directly and simply, absorbing finely tuned details of balance, voicing and articulation within a big picture (such as the *Scherzo's* rarely observed non-*legato* phrasings). The long *cantabiles* of Op 110's *Adagio ma non troppo* lend themselves better to Schiff's hand-breaking than the first movement's gentle, rapid figurations. However, the pianist assiduously navigates the fugue's tricky tempo relationships.

Schiff begins Op 111's *Maestoso* promisingly (note the impeccably gauged trills, for example), only to tread gingerly in a rather four-square, underprojected *Allegro con brio*. Only a few fussy distensions break Schiff's long-lined focus and concentration in the expansively conceived *Arietta*, where the long chains of trills fill the room at even their softest point. ECM's sound remains remarkably consistent and lifelike between the two different venues from which these recordings stem. **Jed Distler**

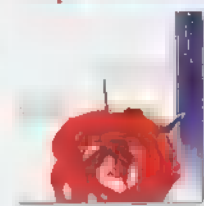
## Chopin

Four Ballades, Barcarolle, Op 60.  
Fantasia, Op 49, Four Mazurkas, Op 30

Alessandra Ammara pf

Arts © 47696-2 (72' • DDD)

**Persuasive – if occasionally over-egged –  
Chopin from an eloquent young Italian**



Alessandra Ammara is an Italian pianist who, like many of her compatriots, has won multiple prizes on the competition circuit. And here, in her generously packed Chopin recital, she shows herself a vividly communicative artist who leaves no stone unturned in her search for the composer's inner heart and truth. At the same time, for all her powers of persuasion, there are times when you wish she would allow Chopin more of his own voice and aim for a more natural poetic distillation. Her *rubato* can be more flushed than poised, and the first of the Op 30 Mazurkas proceeds in fits and starts with too little sense of line or continuity. The desperate, minor-key malaise of No 4, too, is distorted by overemphasis. However, there is much to admire in Ammara's very personal view of the Four Ballades. Unlike, say, Pogorelich's death-defying *lento* in the Second Ballade's *andantino* opening, her ease provides a fine contrast with the following *presto* storms. The First Ballade's coda, too, with Chopin's

exceptional demands for the ultimate in passion and bravura, is thrillingly propulsive, so that those looking for an eloquent complement to other more distanced and aristocratic alternatives may well find Ammara to their taste. She is well recorded and, beneath ■ photograph of her peering through a picturesque gateway, she pays tribute to her recording team and Sicilian location. Charles Rosen's stimulating and provocative notes, taken from his *The Romantic Generation*, provide a further plus. **Bryce Morrison**

## Chopin

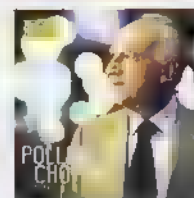
Piano Sonata No 2, Op 35. Ballade No 2, Op 38.  
Mazurkas, Op 33. Waltzes, Op 34.

Impromptu No 2, Op 36

Maurizio Pollini pf

DG © 477 7626GH (57' • DDD)

**Refined accounts by Pollini that  
vividly illuminate Chopin's genius**



The programme embraces Chopin's Opp 33–38 with the exception of the two Nocturnes, Op 37 (a shame – there was room ■■ accommodate them), though they're not played in chronological order. Pollini begins with one of the finest accounts of the Ballade No 2 that I have heard, the maelstrom that erupts after the pastoral first page sounding like a howl of despair. The four Mazurkas, Op 33, and three Waltzes, Op 34, not only form a contrast to the Ballade but are themselves – a measure of Chopin's genius, this – contrasted with each other. The F sharp major Impromptu, almost a mini-ballade, is heard in another refined account, Pollini relishing the *leggiero jeu perlé* scale passagework at the close.

In the Second Sonata, Pollini unites what Schumann called "four of [Chopin's] wildest children" into a family, a feat managed by few pianists, the first movement (with ■ *da capo* repeat) leading quite naturally into the *Scherzo* and so on. He's obviously using the same edition of the Sonata as in his 1984 recording, for in the Funeral March he still plays the second beat of bar 14 (0'59" and later at 6'24") as two equal quavers, whereas it is always played elsewhere as dotted quaver-semiquaver (which is what both my editions have); disconcerting in so extremely familiar a theme.


It'd be difficult for Pollini to produce an ugly sound (and he doesn't here), but while the piano is captured from a slight distance (say the front row of the stalls), the pianist's frequent nasal intakes of breath are recorded in close-up. **Jeremy Nicholas**

## Debussy



Estampes. Images, Book 2. Préludes, Book 2  
Russell Sherman pf  
Avie © AV2164 (68' • DDD)

**Here Debussy's frustration with pianists' disregard for directions is entirely justified**



Russell Sherman's programme (the  of a complete Debussy cycle?) reminds you in a salutary if unintentional way that although Debussy's scores do not appear radically

different they are marked with a meticulous, typically Gallic precision. Ignore the composer at your peril, and remember his tireless complaint that pianists disregarded his larger, let alone his smaller, pinpoint directions.

Such thoughts came  mind as I listened to Sherman's free and easy view of the score; liberating in one sense but confusing in another. Reacting strongly to what he  as dry academicism or literalism, he is rhapsodic to a fault. Out of a finer control and discipline surely comes a finer and ultimate distillation of Debussy's poetic and revolutionary genius. Why the sudden lurch at the start of "Bruyères", destroying all sense of an idyllic poise and calm; why the constant desynchronisation of the hands in "La soirée dans Grenade"; why so reckless and unfocused in "Jardins sous la pluie"? The list continues, leaving the listener enervated and longing for greater musical focus and rigour.


Sherman has written his own notes in his familiar mandarin prose. Of "Brouillards" he writes: "Stillness leaves no footprint. Anonymity shrivels to anomie, as the departing souls join columns laboring under the false illusions of redemption." Such comments, like the performances, are subjective to the point of obscurity. Meanwhile, Avie's presentation is lavish and their sound captures ideally Sherman's misty-eyed view of his beloved composer. **Bryce Morrison**

## Fauré

Ballade, Op 19. Mazurka, Op 32. Préludes, Op 103. Quatre Valses-Caprices  
Jean-Claude Pennetier pf  
Mirare © MIR072 (77' • DDD)





**Pennetier shines a clear light into the liquid depths of a musical enigma**





While complete  of Debussy's and Ravel's piano works abound, there is a dearth of similarly integral recordings of France's still most-misunderstood composer,

of music of a daunting emotional and technical intricacy. This makes the first volume of Jean-Claude Pennetier's projected complete cycle of ►


## Another from Oleg

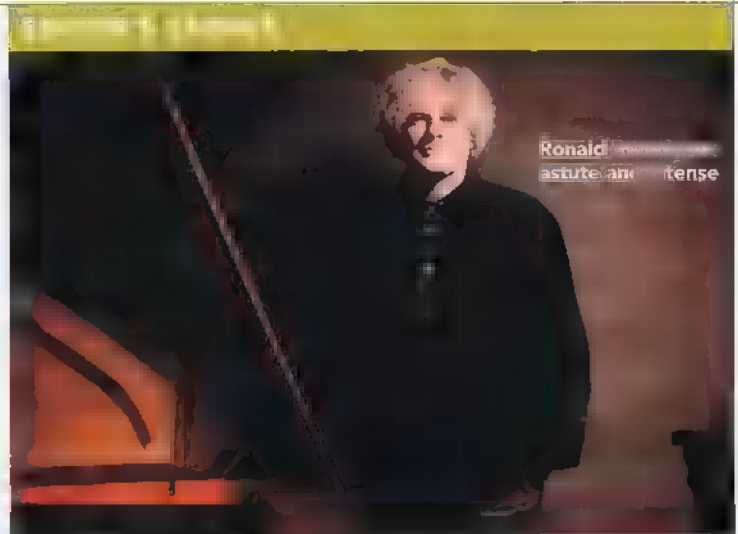
Russian pianist Oleg Marshhev recently returned to the  record a solo recital disc for Danacord. Due for imminent release, it includes Liszt's *Funérailles* and *Spanish Rhapsody*, Chopin's Op 64 Waltzes and Scriabin's *Vers la flamme*. Marshhev has recorded  than 30 CDs for Danacord, the most recent featuring  concertos by Scriabin, Rimsky-Korsakov and  accompanied by the South Jutland Symphony Orchestra conducted by Vladimir Ziva (8/08). Future recording plans include the concertos of Brahms and Schumann and the complete works for piano and orchestra by Stravinsky.

## Guts and grace

Following her July 2007 Oryx recording of Bach's Six Sonatas for violin and harpsichord with Ottavio Dantone, Viktoria Mullova recorded the composer's complete Solo Violin Sonatas and Partitas for the label during October. The disc, due for release around March or April next year, marks the first time that Mullova has recorded the complete solo works – back in 1994 she set down the Partitas for Philips. On the  recording Mullova plays a 1750 Guadagnini with gut strings, the same instrument featured in her 2007  from which she elicited a performance of "grace and beauty", according to Gramophone's Lindsay Kemp (9/07)

## Hamelin's Chopin

January  sees the release of Marc-André Hamelin's disc of Chopin piano works for Hyperion. Recorded in March this year at London's Henry Wood Hall, the album includes Piano Sonatas Nos 2 and 3, *Berceuse*, Op 57, *Nocturnes*, Op 27 Nos 1 and 2, and the *Barcarolle*, Op 60. Hamelin issued Godowsky's Strauss transcriptions on the label in August.



Ronald Brautigam  
astute and intense

**Brautigam's Beethoven is more than just a compelling case for period pianos**

## Beethoven



'Complete Works for Solo Piano, Vol 6'



Piano Sonatas – Nos 21–25


Ronald Brautigam pf


BIS © BIS-SACD1573 (73' • DDD/DSD)



Volume 6 in Ronald Brautigam's Beethoven cycle offers stunning performances that  technically breathtaking, stylistically astute, emotionally intense and musically alive in every moment. What is more, they make the most compelling case on disc for period instruments in this repertoire. Go to the *Waldstein's* Rondo, for example, to hear uncommon textural differentiation from register  register, where Beethoven's controversial long pedal markings make sense, the left-hand figurations emerge with rare shape and purpose, and the octave *glissandi* in the coda are light as feathers.

In both the *Waldstein's* and *Appassionata's* first movements, Brautigam's fast tempi generate drama and tension, not  much through sheer speed (although they're pretty darn fast!)  by way of characterful thematic contrasts, pointed accents and subtle yet expressively powerful modifications of the basic pulse. The slightly militant edge with which Brautigam phrases the graceful main theme in the Op 54 Sonata's first movement makes the subsequent octaves in triplets sound less jarring in context. At first one fears that his brisk pace

for the second movement leaves Beethoven's humbler *Allegretto* directive  the starting-gate, but the clarity of the toccata-like part writing and off-beat accents make Brautigam's conception work.

By contrast, the little Op 79 Sonata's outer movements  comparatively sedate and graceful. Not since Glenn Gould's studio version or Rudolf Serkin's live BBC Legends recording have I heard Op 78's *Allegro vivace* dispatched with the joyful irreverence and comic timing that Brautigam serves up here. Wonderful sound quality too, in both SACD and conventional two-channel formats. Don't pass up this amazing release! **Jed Distler**





Respectful yet imaginative:  
Jean-Efflam Bavouzet



Another ravishing release from Jean-Efflam Bavouzet – so what are you waiting for?



## Debussy

'Complete Works for Solo Piano, Vol 4'  
Images. 12 Etudes. Etude retrouvée (ed Howat)  
Jean-Efflam Bavouzet *pf*  
Chandos ■ CHAN10497 (76' • DDD)

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet's flexible virtuosity and innate grasp of Debussy's style and sound world yields ravishing, freshly minted interpretations of the *Images* and *Etudes* that proudly rank with (and sometimes surpass) the catalogue's reference versions. The *Images* gain welcome nourishment from Bavouzet's portfolio of ravishing colour shadings and articulations, while easily absorbing such pianistic liberties as playing ■ hand before the other, à la Michelangeli. His headlong, impulsive "Homage à Rameau" contrasts with similarly nuanced yet more austere readings. In "Poissons d'or", he sneaks a few piranhas into the fishbowl as he modifies Debussy's *aussi léger que possible* directive with volatile dynamic hairpins and witty accents. "Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fût" also rivets your attention via his seductive *legato* and three-dimensional textures.

Although I'm not familiar with Bavouzet's earlier *Etudes* edition on Canyon Classics, his Chandos remake may well be the best I've heard. Mitsuko Uchida's steely precision, Florent Boffard's luscious tone, plus Ju-Ying Song's poise and clarity all roll into one and beyond in

Bavouzet's respectful yet imaginative hands. As you follow the intelligently contoured left-hand counterlines of "Pour les tierces" you almost don't notice the fluency and easy evenness of Bavouzet's right-hand double notes. On the other hand, in "Pour les huit doigts" and "Pour les degrés chromatiques" he favours melodic inflection and linear motion over Aimard's

'Uchida's steely precision, Boffard's luscious tone and Song's poise and clarity all roll into one – and beyond'

and Uchida's smoother, scintillating surfaces. The difficult leaps of "Pour les accords" have rarely sounded less like technical feats and more like music, and "Pour les arpegges composés" rivals Horowitz's 1965 reading for harmonic pointing and sexiness.

Bavouzet precedes this *étude* with ■ full-bodied, emotionally generous performance of its recently rediscovered earlier version, *Etude retrouvée*. ■ can guarantee readers that this attractively engineered release will reveal more and more details to savour with each rehearing. If you haven't yet ordered it, what are you waiting for? **Jed Distler**

Fauré's piano music doubly welcome. His is clearly a labour of love rather than duty and my guess is that Fauré, who was very particular regarding the performance of his music, would have welcomed Penner's clear-sightedness and a musical assurance that avoids all exaggeration or sentimentality. His initial hesitancy in the *Ballade* blossoms into a suitably delicate brilliance, expressive freedom and power (Fauré dreaded pianists who played his music as if the shutters were closed). At the same time there ■ a percussive edge to his sound that can bring Fauré's liquidity and iridescence down to earth. This is particularly true of the four *Valses-Caprices*, works of dazzling wit, elegance and urbanity, shimmering with what Ravel called Fauré's "equivocations of harmony". But where Penner excels is in the leap from such gaiety to the pained and cloistered world of the Op 103 *Préludes*. And whether in the blaze of defiance of Nos 2 and 4 or in the stifled progressions of No 7, he shows himself memorably sympathetic to Fauré's troubled interior life during his last years. Less subtle and insinuating in early Fauré than Germaine Thyssen-Valentin (*Testament*, 8/02), Penner is nearly her rival in the later works. I look forward to follow-ups ■ this well recorded disc, though with the warning ■ all first-comers to Fauré: once this music gets under your skin you will be haunted for ever. **Bryce Morrison**

## Fontana

Première Fantaisie brillante sur les motifs de *Sonnambula* de Bellini, Op 14. A la mazurka. La Havane (Fantaisie sur des motifs Américains et Espagnols), Op 10. Douze Réveries (*Etudes-Préludes*) en deux suites, Op 8. *Elégie*, Op 7. Trois *Mazurkas*, Op 21. *Souvenirs de l'île de Cuba – Deux Fantaisies*, Op 12. *Ballade*, Op 17

Hubert Rutkowski *pf*

Acte Préalable ■ AP0160 (81' • DDD)

Music by Chopin's amanuensis is an intriguing if ■ world-beating discovery



If the name is unfamiliar, then you can't have been paying close enough attention to your Chopin studies. Julian Fontana (1810-69) was born in the ■ year ■ Chopin

and they became close friends during their school years in Warsaw. Exiled in Paris, he became Chopin's factotum, secretary and copyist. After Chopin's death, it was Fontana who assembled and edited those manuscripts that had not been published during the composer's lifetime (Opp 66-74). Along the way, Fate dealt ■ cruel blows to Fontana and he ended it all the day before Christmas Eve 1869 by poisoning himself with carbon monoxide.

As far as I can tell, this is the first time any of his music has been recorded. ■ can't say it is a great discovery, its main interest being that it was written by Chopin's friend, secretary, factotum, etc, etc, but there ■ none the less

some attractive individual pieces that might furnish an intriguing encore. Chopin is, as you would expect, everywhere, but the best works are Mendelssohn-influenced (Op 8 Nos 13, 14 and 18, for instance). The five movements of *La Havana* are historically interesting for being the first music by a European to feature Latin American themes but, despite a fairly demanding treatment of *La jota aragonesa* (later used to greater effect by Gottschalk and by Liszt in his *Spanish Rhapsody*), it is bland and bloodless stuff.

Warsaw-born (1981) Hubert Ruckowski proves a fine exponent of this genre of music, the third winner of this label's imaginative "Forgotten Polish Music" competition. So the series, admirably, not only provides a valuable calling-card for debutants but allows us to sample a whole disc of intriguing world premiere recordings. **Jeremy Nicholas**

## Guastavino

Complete Piano Music

Martin Jones pf

Nimbus ■ ■ ■ NIS818/20 (3h 34' • DDD)

**Magical music by this Argentine composer will give hours of pleasure**



Although Carlos Guastavino (1912-2000) spent a significant portion of his adult life in bustling, cosmopolitan Buenos Aires, he was born and raised in Santa Fe, the heart of what Argentines call "the interior". Perhaps Guastavino's un-urbane roots account for his music's melodically sweet, open-hearted character. Certainly his style is less angular and aggressive than that of his more famous contemporary, Alberto Ginastera.

The earliest works here – *Gato*, a lively, syncopated dance, and the more melancholy *Bailecito*, both from 1940 – establish a Nationalist mood that Guastavino sustained over the course of his career. In fact, when one reaches his final set of piano pieces, the *Diez cantos populares* (1976), it's surprising how little has changed. True, the writing is noticeably pared down and refined – he seems to say more with fewer notes – but his folksy tunefulness remains ■ charming as ever.

That Guastavino was ■ miniaturist is unarguable. He remains best known for his songs, and the majority of his piano pieces might be described as "songs without words". Even his lone Sonata is constructed in four rather slender, songful movements – though with its cyclical structure, it holds together rather well. Why it's not played or recorded more often is difficult to fathom. Then again, the same could be said for so much of what's contained on these three generously filled discs. The three preludes that make up *La siesta* (1952), for example, are fragrantly atmospheric and full of exquisite harmonic detail. Yet Guastavino can be profound, too, as in the seventh of the

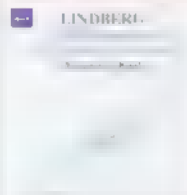
10 *Cantilenas Argentinas* (1958), a tiny portrait of yearning melancholy that's akin ■ some of Brahms's darker intermezzi.

Throughout, Martin Jones shows just how magical this music can be. The faster, rhythmically active pieces are dashed off with smiling exuberance whereas the more lyrical ones are given a tastefully affectionate caress. Nimbus's recorded sound is on the reverberant side, evoking the ambience of an empty concert hall. A more intimate acoustic might have been more apt but, well, that's quibbling. This is a marvellous, valuable set that's already given me many hours of pleasure. **Andrew Farach-Colton**

## Lindberg

Twine. Klavierstück. Tre Pianostücke. Jubilees. Etudes – No 1; No 2. Play P. Musik för två pianon\*. Ralph van Raat with \*Maarten van Veen pff  
Naxos © 8 570542 (73' • DDD)

**Lindberg's complete piano works show the seeds of his mature style**



Magnus Lindberg is best known on disc for expansive, richly expressive orchestral scores such as *Aura*, as well as the recent clarinet and violin concertos. This survey of his music for one and two pianos shows where this later, utterly assured mainstream style comes from, and the result is quite a surprise.

Three works written between Lindberg's 18th and 20th birthdays (1976-78) are exercises in the kind of Boulezian avant-gardism that was already passé (not least for Boulez himself) in the 1970s but which suited Lindberg down to the ground as he flexed his creative muscles. Obvious flaws, especially in the overlong *Klavierstück* (1977), by no means cancel out the distinctive, beguiling blend of expressionism and understatement. *In Play* (1979) – the first part at least – there is both form and content of great imagination; and nearly a decade later, with *Twine* (1988), Lindberg is at his absolute best – controlled, challenging, but with a pervasive exuberance that distances the piece from its most obvious model, Berio's *Sequenza IV*. Ralph van Raat is admirably attuned to the music's intricate voicing and weighting, helped by a recording that gives the piano just the right amount of presence and space.

The later works that complete the disc – the six *Jubilees* (2002) and the two *Etudes* (2001, 2004) – don't mark that great an advance on *Twine*: nor is there any reason why they should. *Jubilee V* is the most immediately appealing – a punchy *scherzo* all the better for avoiding the hints of Messiaenic birdsong that crop up in some of the other pieces. If Lindberg doesn't always shun predictable pattern-making in his later scores, he more than compensates by the technical bravura and uninhibited eclecticism which ■ given their fullest rein in the recent concertos. **Arnold Whittall**

## Leslie De'Ath



Leslie De'Ath:  
infectious enjoyment



A delightful recital that shows Mayerl's essential place in the piano repertoire

## Mayerl

Mayerl April's Fool. Beguine Impromptu. The Big Top – Clowning; Entrance; Trapeze. Three Contrasts, Op 24 – Pastoral. The Forgotten Forest. From a Spanish Lattice. In my Garden: Autumntime – Amber Leaves. In my Garden: Summertime – Alpine Bluebell; Meadowsweet. Four Insect Oddities – Praying Mantis; Ladybird Lullaby. Three Japanese Pictures, Op 25 – The Cherry Dance. Jill All Alone. Leprechaun's Leap. Piano Exaggerations – Antiquary. Postman's Knock. Siberian Lament. Song of the Fir-Tree. Three Syncopated Rambles – 6am: The Milkman (Scherzo). Weeping Willow. Minuet for Pamela French/Mayerl Phil the Fluter's Ball  
Leslie De'Ath pf  
Dutton Epoch © CDLX7211 (77' • DDD)

Leslie De'Ath, who has so nobly served the piano music of Cyril Scott, has now turned to Billy Mayerl. His selection focuses less on the early virtuoso pieces that made Mayerl's name as "lightning fingers" than on some of the more relaxed lyrical works in the central English tradition of Bridge, Ireland and Scott. This CD offers such gems as the *In my Garden* set from the late 1940s, which would make ideal teaching pieces, although most of Mayerl's music has been out of print for years. Why?

De'Ath has obviously chosen the pieces he likes best rather than representing the sets in which Mayerl chose to publish them – as Eric Parkin does in his most recent recordings of the complete works (Chandos). There are now plenty of contenders on CD, including Mayerl himself (Conifer). Alex Hassan (Shellwood Productions) plays in a boisterous ragtime tradition, sometimes improvising; Parkin plays with superb idiomatic style and is unrivalled in the song transcriptions; De'Ath sees Mayerl, especially in the later pieces, as belonging to the classical tradition. This is a personal anthology, well recorded with good notes from De'Ath, and it reminds ■ that Mayerl's music is an essential part of the British piano repertoire and that it's the responsibility of classical pianists to put it across, although few will do it with this kind of infectious enjoyment. **Peter Dickinson**



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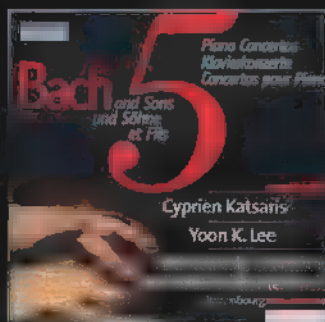


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## Rameau

'La Pantomime'

Pièces de clavecin – in G major-minor; in A major-minor; in D minor. Pièces de clavecin ■ concert' – La Coulicam; La Livri; Air pour les esclaves africains; La Forqueray; La Cupis; La Pantomime Skip Sempé with 'Olivier Fortin *hpds* Paradox © PA0005 (58' ■ DDD) Includes bonus DVD

**Nobility, humour and perfect ensemble-playing from Sempé and Fortin**



Skip Sempé is known for a love of spontaneity, which informs his solo performances and enlivens the duos. Technically demanding if idiomatic, Rameau's music has the

power to impress and amuse. Asked what he thought was most important to Rameau, Sempé replied "nobility and humour". Both can be found in abundance on this CD (the former in the Sarabande, the latter in *Le Triomphe* and *Les Cyclopes*, which together with *La Dauphine* epitomise extrovert virtuosity) – but further delights await in *L'Inharmonique* and *L'entretien des Muses*, where we hear – thanks to Sempé's formidable command of "rhetorical syntax" – Rameau seemingly conducting ■ inner dialogue with himself.

In the tradition begun by Couperin, Sempé and Fortin perform five duo arrangements of single *Pièces de clavecin* ■ concert (originally for keyboard and two further instruments) and one air from *Les Indes galantes* (reduced from an orchestral score). The luxuriant textures that result are perfect for *La Forqueray*, evoking as it does a viol-player known for his excesses, but they're less successful in other pieces where details ■ blurred and subtlety compromised, if nevertheless their phrasing is beautifully judged.

Several of the duo tracks from the CD are duplicated on the accompanying DVD, allowing us to glimpse the recording process. Commenting on the challenge of performing with another harpsichordist, Sempé concedes that it is almost impossible to achieve "razor-edged" vertical precision and that instead the guiding principle is "touch-oriented horizontality". He's too modest. With a minimum of eye contact, their timing is perfection. **Julie Anne Sadle**

### REISSUE OF THE MONTH

## York Bowen

'The Complete Solo 78rpm Recordings'

Bach Partita No 2, BWV826 – Capriccio Beethoven Piano Concerto No 4. Piano Sonatas – No 13; I; No 24 Bowen Suite No 2, Op 30 – Finale. The Way to Polden – An Ambling Tune, Op 76. Arabesque, Op 20 No 1. Hans Anderson, Op 58 – Thumbelina; The Windmill Brahms Capriccio, Op 76 No 2 Chopin Ballade No 3, Op 47. Scherzo No 2, Op 31. Waltz, Op 34 No 1. Polonaise, Op 26 No 1. Etude, Op 25 No 5. Preludes, Op 28 – Nos 3, 20 and 23 Cochrane Le ruisseau Debussy Estampes – Jardins sous la pluie. Arabesque No 2 Gardiner Five Pieces – No 3, London

Bridge Liszt Eglogue, S160 No 7 Mendelssohn Scherzo, Op 16 No 2 Moscheles Etude, Op 70 No 5 Rachmaninov Prelude, Op 23 No 5. Polichinelle, Op 3 No 4 Schumann Faschingsschwank ■ Wien Schütt Etude Mignone, Op 16 No 1

York Bowen *pf*

'Aeolian Orchestra / Stanley Chapple

APR mono © APR6007 (121' ■ ADD)

Recorded 1915-27

**These important recordings reveal the masterly pianism of York Bowen**



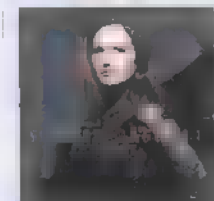
APR has a reputation for the valuable and unexpected when it comes to historic piano recordings, but this is something else. Few of even the most dedicated pianophiles will have known of the existence of these discs made between 1915 and 1927, ■ but two for the Vocalion label. There has recently been a notable increase of interest ■ his music; these recordings reveal what a masterly pianist he was. Now, unquestionably, York Bowen, "the English Rachmaninov", can be seen ■ a serious and unpardonable case of neglect.

Though not presented in chronological order, the set opens understandably with the first ever recording of Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto, a late acoustic from 1925 which swiftly disappeared with the contemporaneous arrival of electrical recordings and Vocalion's bankruptcy. Here, as throughout this collection, Bowen ■ across as a wonderfully assured musician for whom the studio held no fears. Some may jibe at his stylistically anachronistic cadenzas, but at least he did not attempt to write pastiche Beethoven. This, with ■ rather endearing string *portamenti* and the brass doubling basses, may make it a period curiosity but it has integrity, conviction and is very well conducted by Stanley Chapple, the Vocalion label's director of music ■ the time and only 25 years of age.

Among many performances of standard repertoire that ■ hold their own with those of the greatest pianists of the era (I include Rachmaninov, Moiseiwitsch and Hofmann), Chopin's Ballade No 3 and Scherzo No 2 stand out, as well ■ a rapt performance of his C minor Prelude that makes you hold your breath. Few pianists have ever played the middle section of Rachmaninov's G minor Prelude No 5 to such telling effect. The rarities include five of Bowen's own short works (two of them prefaced by the composer's spoken introduction), two by "Gardiner" (Balfour, presumably) and *Le ruisseau* by "Cochrane": though the booklet doesn't say, this is the extraordinary Peggy Cochrane (1902-88) – pianist, violinist, composer, cabaret star and broadcaster (she recorded ■ violin solos for Vocalion).

The transfers (Ward Marston) ■ amazingly smooth and clear, and APR's annotation is, as always, immaculate. This is first in the queue for next year's historical awards. **Jeremy Nicholas**

### EDITOR'S CHOICE



A debut recital that shows promise beyond TV talent show beginnings

## Sophie Cashell

Chopin Nocturne No 20, Op *posth.*

Scherzo No 3, Op 39 Debussy L'isle joyeuse. Préludes – La cathédrale engloutie; Minstrels Kapustin Motive Force. Op 45 Liszt Ballades – No 1, S170; No 2, S171. Drei Liebesträume, S541 P Martin Two Variations on Irish Airs Ravel Pavane pour une infante défunte Sophie Cashell *pf*

Universal Classics & Jazz © 476 6459 (79' ■ DDD)

Watching the solo finals of the BBC's talent show *Classical Star* at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, ■ was not sure that Sophie Cashell was anything more than ■ modest talent, albeit one with marketable photogenic looks. A year on, I'm not sure that Universal hasn't got a real find on its hands.

Miss Cashell, still a student at the RAM, has turned in an impressive debut full of promise. Not the least of its attractions are beautifully sculpted, poised performances of all three of Liszt's *Liebesträume* instead of just the evergreen No 3. The last – ■ in her fingers than the two lesser-known ones – is far better than, for instance, Kissin's indulgent effort at Verbier (Medici Arts, A/08).

In addition we have both of Liszt's Ballades: No 1 is rarely performed but Miss Cashell makes a convincing case for it with some compelling flights of bravura; and No 2, if somewhat too fragmentary in the early stages, is played with real fire in the belly. I think she will get more out of the C sharp minor Scherzo and *L'isle joyeuse* in the future, though they are far from negligible achievements. Two further refreshingly different choices round off the recital – Philip Martin's *Two Variations on Irish Airs* and Nikolai Kapustin's *Motive Force* were new to me.

The lively, resonant piano sounds rich and natural, though the upper treble floats away in quieter exposed passages, disembodied from the middle and bass registers. Not a big deal. Miss Cashell, on the other hand, probably is.

**Jeremy Nicholas**



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at his disposal. This latest release, featuring the music of Renaissance lutenist and composer Melchior Neusidler, is exception.

Neusidler (1531-94) was the eldest son of Hans Neusidler, himself a composer, lutenist and lute-maker of great distinction. Born in Nuremberg, Neusidler's later moved Augsburg, where, among other activities, he led the refined chamber ensemble Stille Musica. His three lute books together include arrangements of dance tunes, folksongs and chorales, intabulations of madrigals and motets, and contrapuntal Italianate fantasias. O'Dette's programme includes a good cross-section of these works, carefully organised into groups of between two and four contrasting pieces; for example, a typical group might comprise a chordal folksong arrangement, enlivened by rapid divisions, followed by a more textured fantasy and/or polyphonic madrigal, with a lively dance pair – perhaps a *passamezzo* and its attendant *saltarello* – to finish.

Three lutes are used: a six-course, a six-course *alto* and an eight-course. The resulting varied timbres are further supplemented by O'Dette's subtly muted tonal palette, which in turn perfectly complements his dazzling virtuosity and absolute clarity of projection. Somewhat mysteriously, O'Dette also ensures that the differences between bright, unpretentious pieces such as *Der Fuggerin Dantz* and more complex, substantial fantasias such as the *Ricercar secondo* are happily reconciled in Neusidler's superb madrigal intabulations.

This is music of the highest quality and deserves a wide audience. O'Dette's persuasive advocacy should ensure it gets one.

William Yeoman

**'Kapell Rediscovered'**

'The Australian Broadcasts'

**Bach** Suite, BWV 818 **Chopin** Barcarolle, Op 60.

Nocturne, Op 55 No 2. Scherzo No 1, Op 20

**Debussy** Suite Bergamasque **Mozart** Piano

Sonata No 16, K570 **Mussorgsky** Pictures at an

Exhibition **Prokofiev** Piano Sonata No 7, Op 83

**Rachmaninov** Piano Concerto No 3

**Traditional** God Save the Queen

**William Kapell** *pf*

'Victorian Symphony Orchestra /

Sir Bernard Heinze

RCA Seal mono 82876 68560-2

(151' • ADD)

Radio broadcasts live from Town Hall, Melbourne, in July and October 1953

Blazing intensity and wonderful control  
in a young pianist's final recordings



Kapell was killed in a plane crash just south of San Francisco in October 1953 – the flight that was taking him home a week after he had completed a triumphant three-month

tour of Australia. He was 31 years old. Several items from this final trip have surfaced over the years (the Rachmaninov, Mussorgsky and Chopin's Second Sonata), but other rumoured recordings never materialised – until 2003, when the titles issued here were identified in a huge collection of acetate discs recorded off-air by an Australian music lover.

The surfaces are noisy, sometimes heavily swishy (try disc 1 or 12'06"), and the sound is often horribly distorted despite the best efforts of producer Jon M Samuels. His apologia notes that, because they did not make it to the

'Is it all worth persevering with? Oh yes – this is the playing of a sublimely gifted artist'

acetates, a passage in the final movement of the Rachmaninov had to be patched (from a 1948 performance), and that the first movement of the Bach Suite and final pages of the Mussorgsky are taken from other sources. You will not need to be told where these "edits" occur.

So, is it all worth persevering with? Oh yes. This is the playing of a sublimely gifted artist. Five of the works are new to Kapell's discography, including the Debussy, Chopin's Barcarolle and Scherzo No 1, and Prokofiev's Sonata No 7. In the latter three especially, Kapell's ability to see the big picture, his blazing intensity and wonderful control are heard at their best. My only quibble is over the fifth "work". One verse of *God Save the Queen* played from a hymn book really doesn't count. And since when has it been attributed to Thomas Arne?

Jeremy Nicholas

**ANALEKTA****THE FINEST  
CANADIAN  
ENSEMBLES****Gloria!**

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# Vocal

Cantatas continue in style • Bayrakdarian returns to roots • Netrebko delights

## Bach

'Cantatas, Vol 5: Rendsburg/Braunschweig'  
Cantatas – No 45, Es ist dir gesagt, Mensch, was gut ist; No 46, Schauet doch und sehet; No 101, Nimm von uns, Herr, du treuer Gott; No 102, Herr, deine Augen sehen nach dem Glauben; No 136, Erforsche mich, Gott, und erfahre mein Herz; No 178, Wo Gott der Herr nicht bei uns hält

Joanne Lunn *sop* Daniel Taylor,  
Robin Tyson *countertens* Christoph Genz *ten*  
Gothold Schwarz, Brindley Sherratt *bases*  
Monteverdi Choir; English Baroque Soloists /  
Sir John Eliot Gardiner  
Soli Deo Gloria © 2 SDG147 (119' • DDD)  
Recorded live in August 2000

**Increasingly excellent performances of some of Bach's finest mature cantatas**



Our Pilgrimage travels to Rendsburg and Braunschweig for a selection from Bach's "golden years" of vocal writing, 1723-25. The immediacy of the sound

in the former seems almost ideal for the intensity of *Wo Gott der Herr*, which thrusts us into an unyielding paranoia about God's indifference to our plight. Gardiner summons an impressive, generative agitation that illuminates the imagery of shipwreck in the bass aria, as well as the tenor aria with its declamatory "Schweig, schweig" (Be silent) which, despite its final consolation, reeks of dissembling. Brindley Sherratt and Christophe Genz deliver exceptional realisations.

The two remaining cantatas from Rendsburg assume rather less neurosis. The opening choruses are less centred than ■■ imagines Gardiner would have wished and the alto arias are not entirely stable. However, Sherratt's *arioso*, "Es werden viele", is brilliantly blustery and single-minded.

The short journey to the resonant Braunschweig involves a new solo ■■ and performances which are altogether more transporting. If one reveres the "Qui tollis" from the B minor Mass, I wonder whether the opening of *Schauet doch* in its original context of dissolute lamentation doesn't say *even* more? Certainly, Gardiner uses it brilliantly to take off with ■■ of Bach's most jarring fugal exegeses. Equally breathtaking is the traumatic opening chorus, on Luther's hymn "Vater unser", of BWV101 with its almost flagellatory *appoggiaturas* to depict the breaking of Satan's hold.

In BWV46 and BWV102 (with another sensational opening chorus), the arias and obbligato contributions are remarkable. Gardiner calls BWV102's "Dein Wetter" one of Bach's

rare "tsunami" arias: bass Gothold Schwarz carries this image ideally, accompanied by the fine trumpet-playing of Gabriele Cassone.

If not flawless compared to the studio series, this Pilgrimage encourages a heart-warming depth of engagement with the music. We can also endorse Gardiner's summary that these works are more than doctrinal dissertations but creations of "overwhelming poetic transformative force". Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

## Bach

'Cantatas, Vol 40'  
Cantatas – No 79, Gott, der Herr, ist Sonn und Schild; No 137, Lobe den Herren, den mächtigen König der Ehren; No 164, Ihr, die ihr euch Christo nennet; No 168, Tue Rechnung! Donnerwort  
Yukari Nonoshita *sop* Robin Blaze *counterten*  
Makoto Sakurada *ten* Peter Kooij *bass*  
Bach Collegium Japan / Masaaki Suzuki  
BIS © ■■ BIS-SACD1671 (57' • DDD/DSD)

**Suzuki's cantata series reaches its 40th with a volume that's good in parts**



Masaaki Suzuki's 13-year cycle reaches Vol 40 with works from late 1725.

Having arrived in Leipzig two and a half years earlier and composed ■■

extraordinary quantity of

cantatas, Bach had clearly lost some appetite for new excursions in this medium. The ■■ that do exist, however, ■■ less remarkable.

*Lobet den Herrn* fails to lift off, the opening movement lacking edge and shine in its muffled articulation, and the syncopations short ■■ drive. Where Collegium Musicum Japan scores is in the reflective gestures of pieces like *Ihr, die ihr euch Christo nennet*, with its conceits ■■ the burden of guilt for each individual who passes the distressed traveller. This and the Reformation work *Gott der Herr ist Sinn und Schild* bring out Suzuki's instinct for the unfolding of an extended fugal movement. The choir truly glows here. The work becomes even more involving with Robin Blaze producing, in his ideal register, a delectable reading of the first aria.

This volume is not a highlight of the series, possibly because the works, *in toto*, are less unified in concept than others. But there are several fine *scena* arias: from the rocks which split asunder in the opening of *Tue Rechnung! Donnerwort* to "Kapital und Interessen" which refers ■■ debts to be paid back to God. The analogy with Leipzig's business world would not have gone unnoticed then and it resonates, just a little, now.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

## Bach

Cantatas – No 82 – Aria: Ich habe genug; Recit: Ich habe genug; Aria: Schlummert ein; Recit: Mein Gott! wann kommt das schöne Nun!; Aria: Ich freue mich auf meinen Tod; No 128 – Aria: Auf, mit hellem Schall; No 158 – Recit: Der Friede ■■ mit dir; Aria & Choral: Welt, ade! ich bin dein müde; Recit: Nun Herr, regiere meinen Sinn; Choral: Hier ist das rechte Osterlamm; No 159 – Aria: Es ist vollbracht; No 211 – Aria: Hat man nicht mit seinen Kindern. Christmas Oratorio – Grosser Herr und starker König; Erleucht' auch meine finstre Sinnen. St Matthew Passion – Am Abend, da es kühle war; Mache dich, mein Herze

Ralph Kohn *bar*

English Chamber Orchestra / Ian Watson  
Raphael Music © ■■ RAPHCDD06 (63' • DDD)

**A veteran singer in the service of Bach**



"All one gets from plaguey daughters": that was how we used to know the aria which so engagingly opens this recital. It's the song of the exasperated father in the so-called *Coffee* Cantata,

*Schweig stille, plaudert nicht*. And when that is over, a quieter, more meditative mood predominates; for this, with some exceptions, is a selection of texts set by Bach having death in view. And there is nothing morbid or depressing about it.

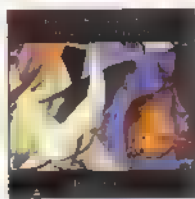
Ralph Kohn has spent much of his life in the service of music. I don't know precisely how old he is now but would guess he has a proverbial three-score and ten well in view. If so, it would not be his singing that told me; the voice is still clear, mostly steady, not rich but well focused, and the breath control is remarkable. These ■■ arias which make formidable demands upon the technique. Bach's writing does not lie comfortably on the voice as Handel's does: he expects all parts of the compass to be in good working order, sending the singer up hill and down dale, leaping over gaps, running over long distances without stopping ■■ draw breath. At an age when most have stopped for rather more than a breath, this veteran still runs the course like an athlete in training.

But a Bach aria is much more than its vocal line. The instruments, especially those with obligato parts, play ■■ full role. Splendid work by the ECO and vigorous, well judged direction by Ian Watson make a large contribution (and if there is one cause for regret it is that the soloists are not named and neither are the singers in the two chorales). The booklet has been particularly well prepared with some rare illustrations and, most notably, a reproduction of the autograph of the opening of the *Ascension* Cantata, BWV128. John Steane

IN THE  
STUDIO

## Bach • Kuhnau

Bach Masses – BWV234; BWV235

Kuhnau/Bach Motet, 'Der Gerechte kommt um'  
Eugénie Warnier *sop* Magid El-Bushra *countertenor*  
Emiliano Gonzalez-Toro *ten* Sydney Fierro *bar*  
Pygmalion / Raphaël Pichon  
Alpha © ALPHA130 (62' • DDD • T/A)Open-hearted and life-affirming  
performances of two of Bach's Masses

With all the luxuriance of expression that ■ Gallic approach to Bach can bring, Pygmalion don't disappoint. The opening motet, Bach's mesmerising reworking of his

predecessor Johann Kuhnau's *Der Gerechte kommt um*, is something of a template for the textural and vocal ardour heard later in the two beautifully contrasted "Lutheran" Masses in G minor and A major. The motet is indeed a "period piece" of Bachian legacy in Leipzig; one can see why the composer felt there was scope for adding an instrumental context to Kuhnau's gracious, doleful *a cappella* lines, even if the harpsichordist's embellishments here become increasingly wearing.

The richly scored Mass in G minor belies the conventional view that these parody works are poor relations to the original cantata models. In fact, the craft of Bach's necessary tweaks (in this case from BWV72, 102 and 187) appear more ingenious the more you examine them. Most persuasive from these Parisian musicians ■ the vitality of the choral movements of both Masses and the richly flavoured instrumental accompaniment, directed by Raphaël Pichon with warmth and ■ unusual sensitivity to the periodic structure of each movement.

Bach's transformation of a theatrical dialogue between "Vox Christi" and mankind in the cantata *Halt im Gedächtnis* (BWV67) to a strikingly original *Gloria* is agreeably validated in this astute and unhurried reading. The solo voices here may not quite carry the day in terms of individual quality but the artistic ambition alongside an open, unfussy affirmation is a joy. Less honed and refined than Cantus Cölln (Harmonia Mundi, 8/07), Pygmalion bring greater range.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

## Berlioz

Grande Messe des morts, Op 5

Ronald Dowd *ten* Wandsworth School Boys' Choir;  
London Symphony Chorus and Orchestra /  
Colin DavisPentatone © ■ ■ ■ PTC5186 191 (92' • ADD/DSD)  
From Philips 416 283-2PH2 (4/86\*)A third outing for ■ recording that's  
■ peerless after almost 40 years

Colin Davis's recording of the *Grande Messe des morts* was made in Westminster Cathedral in 1969 as part of the Philips cycle marking the centenary ▶

## Devoted to Dufay

The Binchois Consort under conductor Andrew Kirkman will release "The Court of Savoy" for Hyperion in January. Recorded at the Chapel of All Souls College, Oxford, in February this year, the album is devoted to works by Dufay, and includes his *Missa Se la face ay pale*, *Venite benedicti*, *Gloriosus Deus*, *Iudicabunt sancti*, *Mirabilis Deus*, *Gaudete iusti*, *O très piteux* and *Magnanime gentis*. The Binchois Consort's second Dufay recording for Hyperion – "Music for St James the Greater", recorded in July 1997 – was Gramophone's 1999 Early Music Recording of the Year.

## Eleventh heaven

Volume 11 of Hyperion's "The Songs of Robert Schumann" is released in January, featuring German baritone Hanno Müller-Brachmann, in his first recording for the label, and leading ■ accompanist Graham Johnson, who ■ ■ ■ heard on all 37 volumes of the Hyperion Schubert Edition as well as on the previous 10 volumes of this Schumann ■ ■ ■. Among the song collections included here are *Sechs Gesänge*, Op ■ ■ ■, *Drei Gesänge*, Op 83, *Fünf Lieder und Gesänge*, Op 127, and *Sechs Gedichte* ■ ■ ■ dem *Liederbuch eines Malers*, Op 36.

## Dutch courage

Dutch mezzo-soprano Christianne Stotijn will release her third album for Onyx in January, devoted to Tchaikovsky romances and featuring pianist Julius Drake. The mezzo learnt Russian especially for the CD ■ ■ ■ toured the programme widely with Drake before recording it. The album follows Stotijn's "Mahler: Urlicht" disc, also featuring Drake and released in October 2006, and her Schubert, Berg and Wolf album, recorded with pianist Joseph Breini and released in February 2006.

La Risonanza:  
affectionate and  
conversational

Precision and elegance: this survey of youthful Handel brings another delight

## Handel

Aminta e Fillide, 'Arresta il passo', HWV83.

Clori, mia bella Clori, HWV92

Nuria Rial, Maria Grazia Schiavo *sops*La Risonanza / Fabio Bonizzoni *hpd*

Glossa © GCD921 524 (67' • DDD)

The fourth instalment of La Risonanza's survey of Handel's youthful Italian cantatas is devoted to two works probably composed for the Marquis Francesco Maria Ruspoli in Rome. Karl Böhmer's booklet essay is an enjoyable insight into the world of the Arcadian Academy, although a few speculative aspects regarding the composition and performance of these two cantatas are overstated as facts. But there is no doubt that *Arresta il passo* (nicknamed "Aminta e Fillide") is ■ of the young Handel's most likeable compositions. The Arcadian story of Aminta imploring Fillide to requite his love, and of her gradual melting towards his seduction, is told by La Risonanza in an affectionate and conversational way, with recitatives unhurried and performed with clarity, precision and elegance.

Bonizzoni resists the temptation to ham things up too much, and directs the music with a judicious ear for striking yet tasteful sonority. Sopranos Maria Grazia Schiavo (Aminta) and Nuria Rial (Fillide) achieve the elusive synthesis between stylised poetry, musical refinement and dramatic character. The radiant violin-playing in

Fillide's "Fu scherzo, fu gioco" is a delicately playful illustration of the text's reference to love being a joke and a game, and Rial sings the difficult vocal part effortlessly and with delicious

sagacity. Schiavo is equally impressive in Aminta's "Se vago rio", which has a spellbinding *pizzicato* string accompaniment and strange harmonic twists (Handel later reused it as the Siren's song in *Rinaldo*). Fillide's surprise at her emerging feelings of love for Aminta, and his increasing elation, are delightfully conveyed by all of the vocal and instrumental performers.

*Clori, mia bella Clori* (sung by Schiavo) also benefits from meticulous attention to detail, such as the exquisitely shaded duetting violins in "Mie pupille". La Risonanza once again show that Handel's youthful Italian compositions are breathtaking masterpieces of considerable refinement, subtlety and quality. David Vickers

'There is no doubt that Aminta e Fillide is one of the young Handel's most likeable compositions'





of Berlioz's death. That was a major gramophone enterprise, and most of the records hold their place in the catalogue. This one returned on CD in 1986 and has never been

dislodged – nor excelled, despite the appearance of some other fine performances. Re-presenting it now, Pentatone describes it as “hybrid multichannel”, with an account in the booklet of what is meant by its “Remastered Quadro Recordings”. These are based on multichannel recordings (with which Philips was experimenting in the 1970s), some of which were issued in the short-lived quadraphonic format.

The Requiem is a prime case for such treatment, with the four brass bands of Judgement Day challenging and answering in the *Dies irae*. ■ Donne put it, “at the round earth’s imagin’d corners”. However, Berlioz never intended ■ surround the audience “quadraphonically” but to create ■ depth and spaciousness of sound to fill a great building. No recording ■ do that but the illusion is created here with a sense of separation between the bands. At the other extreme of effect, there are those notorious soft flute/trombone chords in the “Hostias”. These sound accurate and pure, as if the flutes were overtones of the deep, sonorous trombones.

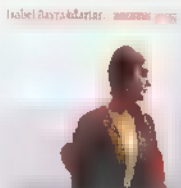
Such effects are, of course, only part of the work, but they are a vital one. The 1986 Phillips CD also includes the *Te Deum*, together with excellent essays by Hugh Macdonald and David Cairns; the new Requiem note is briefer and slighter. **John Warrack**

## Gomidas

Lullaby. Song of the Partridge. Children’s Prayer. The Cloudy Sky/It’s Raining. Apricot Tree. Spring. Mount Alakyaaz/Incense Tree. Dance of Unabi. Dance of Shooshig. Striding. Beaming. Oh Nazan/Jingle Jangle. Ah, Dear Maral. Strolling. Tall as the Poplar Tree. I cannot dance. I’m Burning With Love/Dear Shogher. Oh, What a Delight! The Crane. Without a Home. Call to the sea (all arr Kradjian)

Isabel Bayrakdarian *sop* Serouj Kradjian *pf*  
Chamber Players of the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra / Eduard Topchjan  
Nonesuch © 7559 79910-3 (55’ • DDD)

**A recital that explores the legacy of the father of Armenian classical music**



Canadian-Armenian soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian’s first solo disc, *Joyous Light*, was devoted to Armenian liturgical music and released in 2002. Now,

several CDs – and many major international operatic engagements – later, she returns to her roots with an album exploring the legacy of a composer-ethnomusicologist whose mission, a century ago, was both to preserve and to reinterpret the music of his Armenian homeland.

Gomidas Vartabed (1869-1935) acquired his honorific names in the course of a career that saw him cherished by his compatriots ■ the father of Armenian classical music. Born Sogomon Sogomonian, and also known ■ Sogomon Komitas, he grew up under Ottoman rule and studied Western music in Paris and Berlin. Back home he collected songs and dances that, without his efforts, would have been lost forever in the Turkish genocide of 1915. Those events crippled Gomidas emotionally and put an end to his composing career. He spent the last 17 years of his life in a suburban Paris hospital.

Lightly orchestrated here by Bayrakdarian’s husband, pianist Serouj Kradjian, these exquisitely haunting miniatures sound as if they belong somewhere between Bartók and Canteloube. Like Canteloube’s arrangements, they can seem cumulatively unvaried, but some contrast is provided by two solo piano pieces in the middle of the sequence. The Chamber Players of the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra under Eduard Topchjan are joined by Gevorg Dabaghyan on the *duduk*, a traditional wind instrument that adds dusky colour. Above all, the limpid, melismatic vocal lines allow us to savour the bright lyric soprano of Bayrakdarian at her most relaxed. **John Allison**

## Handel

### Semele

Elisabeth Scholl *sop*.....Semele  
Annette Markert *contr*.....Juno  
Knut Schoch *ten*.....Jupiter; Apollo  
Julia Schmidt *sop*.....Iris  
Ralf Popken *countertenor*.....Athamas  
Britta Schwarz *contr*.....Ino  
Kalus Mertens *bass*.....Cadmus; Somnus  
Junge Kantorei; Frankfurt Baroque Orchestra /  
Joachim Carlos Martini  
Naxos © 8 570431/3 (3h 1’ • DDD)  
Recorded live ■ Kloster Eberbach, Rheingau,  
Germany, ■ May 27, 2007

## Handel

### Hercules

Peter Kooij *bass*.....Hercules  
Nicola Wemyss *mez*.....Dejanira  
Gerlinde Sämman *sop*.....Iole  
Franz Vitzthum *countertenor*.....Lichas  
Knut Schoch *ten*.....Hyllus  
Junge Kantorei; Frankfurt Baroque Orchestra /  
Joachim Carlos Martini  
Naxos © 8 557960/62 (3h 10’ • DDD)  
Recorded live ■ Kloster Eberbach, Rheingau,  
Germany, on June 4, 2006

**Semele sags but the prolific Martini shows he’s up to a Herculean task**

After 1741 Handel never again wrote or performed operas in London, but during the mid-1740s he created these two unstaged English music dramas based on Greek mythology. Well-intentioned concert performances often contain flaws that do not bear repeated listening on CD. The casts in both recordings are predominantly German. Poor pronunciation occasionally

## HANDEL

### Semele

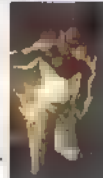
Handel (1741-1764)  
Semele: Elisabeth Scholl  
Juno: Annette Markert  
Jupiter: Knut Schoch  
Iris: Julia Schmidt  
Athamas: Ralf Popken  
Ino: Britta Schwarz  
Cadmus: Kalus Mertens  
Somnus: Junge Kantorei  
Frankfurt Baroque Orchestra  
Joachim Carlos Martini



## HANDEL

### Hercules

Handel (1741-1764)  
Hercules: Peter Kooij  
Dejanira: Nicola Wemyss  
Iole: Gerlinde Sämman  
Lichas: Franz Vitzthum  
Hyllus: Knut Schoch  
Frankfurt Baroque Orchestra  
Joachim Carlos Martini



surfaces to their detriment (Britta Schwarz’s Ino is particularly marred by a Teutonic accent), and very few in *Semele* seem adequately immersed in the language or in their dramatic predicaments: Annette Markert sings Juno’s reaction to news of Jupiter’s infidelity without a hint of feistiness; Elisabeth Scholl’s “Endless pleasure” is devoid of sexy

charm. The Frankfurt Baroque Orchestra is often scrappy in *Semele*, and the Overture is turned into a cringeworthy stumble by the violins’ lack of coordination and dodgy intonation.

The sound engineering is poor, the plodding organ continuo in recitatives is tedious, the choir is unfocused and most of the soloists are weak. Martini includes Ino’s aria “See, she blushing turns her eyes”, which Handel replaced with a recitative version for Athamas before the first performance (hearing this, one feels that Handel’s judgement was correct). The rejected aria version of Juno’s “Behold in this mirror” is also reinstated. There are a few bright spots: Knut Schoch has more enthusiasm in his singing as Jupiter, harpsichordist Ludger Rémy accompanies Semele’s “O sleep, why dost thou leave me?” with sensitivity, and Julia Schmidt delivers a nice interpretation of Cupid’s “Come, Zephyrs come” (which Handel also omitted).

*Hercules* receives a better performance. The orchestra sound like an entirely different group of players (just over half of them are) and often play with precision, vigour and awareness. Peter Kooij is a surprising choice to play the title-role; lighter in timbre than most brawny basses who tackle Hercules, he none the less sings with intelligence and warmth. Franz Vitzthum’s English is just about OK, and he is musically secure. Gerlinde Sämman sings Iole’s difficult arias with assurance; her English pronunciation is among the best from the German singers, and the astonishing aria “My father! Methinks I see” is excellently done. Scottish mezzo-soprano Nicola Wemyss shows astute awareness of Dejanira’s intense moods and gives an effective performance of “Where shall I fly?”. A few blips are inevitable in a live recording, and the choral sonority is woolly and underwhelming, but in certain respects *Hercules* is Martini’s most consistently agreeable Handel recording yet. **David Vickers**

## Haydn

‘Folksong Arrangements, Vol 5’

Scottish Songs for William Napier I,  
HobXXXIa/1-100

Lorna Anderson *sop* Jamie MacDougall *ten*

Haydn Trio Eisenstadt (Harald Kosik *pf*

Verena Stourzh *vn* Hannes Gradwohl *vc*)

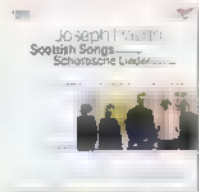
Brilliant Classics © 3 93736 (3h’ • DDD)

## Beethoven · Haydn · Pleyel

'The Pulse of an Irishman: Songs from the British Isles' Folksong arrangements by **Beethoven, Haydn and Pleyel**

Wolfgang Holzmair *bar* Trio Wanderer (Vincent Coq *pf* Raphaël Pidoux *re* Jean-Marc Phillips-Varjabédian *vn*) Cypres © CYP1653 (72' • DDD)

**Enjoyable performances delight ■ these composers' ■ music excursions**



Haydn's many folksong arrangements for the Edinburgh publisher George Thomson were a lucrative sideline of his old age. A decade earlier, though, he had turned out trio arrangements of 100 "Original Scots Songs", apparently as an act of charity ■ bolster the failing London publisher William Napier. Not all the tunes were quite ■

"original" as the publisher implied but these "wild and expressive melodies" (Napier's words), duly refined for the domestic market, were ■ sure-fire success at a time when mist-shrouded Celtic primitivism was all the rage.

These Napier arrangements are altogether less elaborate than the ones Haydn later made for Thomson. Skittering violin figuration can add a kick and a flourish to the livelier songs. But discretion rules. Haydn probably arranged the tunes without the aid of texts (or translations), which may account for some mismatches between words and music. The mellifluous arrangement of the duet "Marg'ret's Ghost", for instance, could hardly be less spooky. Still, many of the tunes are haunting, and more often than not Haydn's arrangements delicately enhance their expressiveness. As in earlier instalments in this series, the Scottish pair of Lorna Anderson and Jamie MacDougall are fresh of tone and thoroughly idiomatic in expression. The Haydn Trio Eisenstadt provide expertly judged accompaniments, with the violinist making much of her opportunities for spirited commentary.

Though not quite a linguistic match for the Anderson-MacDougall axis, Wolfgang Holzmair sings with flair and – a few minor mispronunciations aside – impressive clarity of diction in folksong arrangements by Beethoven, Haydn and Haydn's one-time pupil Ignaz Pleyel. He even essays a more than passable "Oirish" in Beethoven's jaunty "The Pulse of an Irishman". Although Beethoven initially complained to George Thomson that setting folksongs "gave a true artist no real pleasure", the composer obviously warmed to his task. His trio accompaniments abound in felicities of harmony and texture, even touches of motivic development (you can never repress the symphonist in ►

Mesmerising Schubert  
Matthias Goerne



Volume two, and Goerne gives us performances of profound grandeur, mystery and compassion



## Schubert

Abendstern, D806. Abschied von der Harfe, D406. Am Bach im Frühling, D361. Am Flusse first version, D160. An die Laute, D905. An die Musik, D547. An eine Quelle, D530. Am mein Herz, D860. An Mignon, D161. Auf dem See, D543. Auf der Donau, D553. Auflösung, D807. Augenlied, D297. Drang ■ die Ferne, D770. Du bist die Ruh, D776. Der Fischer, D225. Geheimnis An Franz Schubert, D491. Gondelfahrer, D808. Das Heimweh, D456. Heiss mich nicht reden Mignon I (second version), D877/2. Der Herbstabend, D405. Der Herbstnacht, D404. Der Jüngling und der Tod, D545. Klage, D371. Liebeslauschen, D698. Lied. 'Ins stille Land', D403. Das Lied im Grünen, D917. Liedesend, D473. Nachtstück, D672. Nähe des Geliebten, D162. Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt (fourth version), D877/4. Rückweg, D476. Der Sänger am Felsen, D482. Der Sieg, D805. Die Sternennächte, D670. Über Wildemann, D884. Der Wanderer, D649. Wer sich der Einsamkeit ergibt Harfenspieler I, D478. Wie Ulfru fisch, D525. Willkommen und Abschied, D767. Wonne der Wehmut, D260

Matthias Goerne *bar*  
Eric Schneider, Helmut Deutsch *pf*  
Harmonia Mundi © 2 HMC90 2004/5 (124' • ■■■ • T/t)

As on the first volume of Matthias Goerne's Schubert Edition, the recurrent themes here are mortality, solitude and that quintessential German Romantic yearning for ■ unattainable otherness. A handful of Goethe songs, including "Auf dem See" and the ecstatic night ride "Willkommen und Abschied", celebrate the life force. But elegy, fatalism and death-longing predominate, not least in the settings of Schubert's saturnine friend Johann Mayrhofer.

In such repertoire Goerne's mellow, darkly rounded timbre, expressive diction and care – rare in Lieder singers today – for a true, "bound" line ■ well nigh ideal. Even at the most anguished

*fortissimo*, his tone never grows harsh or hectoring. Perfectionism like Goerne's has inevitably provoked charges of over-calculation. Some might protest ■ the ultra-slow tempo for "Du bist die Ruh". Yet ■ was mesmerised by Goerne's beauty of tone and phrasing (founded on seemingly superhuman reserves of breath), and a rapt intensity that rises to spiritual radiance in the final verse. At a more conventional tempo, he sings "An die Musik" ■ a simple, sincere confession of faith, with affectionate touches of *rubato* (and how eloquently Helmut Deutsch's left hand duets with the voice). Elsewhere Goerne's unsentimental tenderness can illuminate little-known songs that seem ordinary on the printed page – "Abschied von der Harfe", say, or the quasi-operatic lament "Der Sänger am Felsen". He even appropriates, successfully, two of Mignon's songs, giving one of the most desolate and – in the central section – disturbed performances of "Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt" you will hear.

True to form, Goerne makes an uncommonly melancholy serenader in "An die Laute" (where I prefer the twinkle of Anthony Rolfe-Johnson in Hyperion's Schubert Edition) and "Des Mädchens Liebeslauschen", which never smiles. Yet he can lighten up, ■ in the story-telling of "Der Fischer" and "Wie Ulfru fisch" – songs in which fish get their own back after the outrage of "Die Forelle" – or an ardent and, at the close, deliciously abandoned "Willkommen und Abschied". Like Deutsch on the first disc, Eric Schneider fully matches Goerne in acumen and command of colour, not least in a performance of "Nachtstück" whose mingled grandeur, mystery and compassionate gentleness I have never heard equalled. **Richard Wignmore**



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Beethoven for long). Time and again he creates preludes and epilogues that encapsulate the songs' essence, nowhere more ravishingly than in the setting of "Faithful Johnnie". The three Pleyel arrangements, though agreeable, are much less inventive; and no one would guess from the decorous "Oh, open the door" that the girl's lover is dying of hypothermia.

With his plangent, tenorish timbre and care for a pure *legato* line, Holzmair sings with unaffected sensitivity in the gender songs. Elsewhere he "sells" the many lusty drinking songs and ballads with humour and brio, though occasionally – as in Haydn's splenetic "My love she's but a lassie yet" – resorting to a kind of *Sprechgesang*. Trio Wanderer, with plenty here to engage them, play with style, zest and evident enjoyment. The awkwardly translated French note is long on guff and gobbledegook ("our existences are a play of permanently self-reflecting mirrors"), short on helpful, accurate information. **Richard Wigmore**

## Ives

'Songs, Vol 3'

Soloists include Janna Baty, Lielle Berman, Jennifer Casey Cabot, Sumi Kittelberger *sops* Tamara Mumford *mec* Ian Howell *countertenor* Matthew Plenk, Kenneth Tarver *tenor* Robert Gardner, Michael Cavalieri, Daniel Trevor Bircher *bass* Patrick Carfizzi *bass-bar* Ayano Kabaoka *glo* Eric Trudel, JJ Penna, Douglas Dickson *pfs* Frederick Teardo *org* Naxos American Classics © 8 559271 (76' • DDD)

## Ives

'Songs, Vol 4'

Soloists include Lielle Berman, Jennifer Casey Cabot, Sara Jakubiak, Sumi Kittelberger *sops* Mary Phillips, Tamara Mumford, Leah Wool *mec* Ian Howell *countertenor* Ryan MacPherson, Matthew Plenk, Kenneth Tarver *tenor* Michael Cavalieri, Robert Gardner *bass* Patrick Carfizzi *bass-bar* David Pittsinger *bass* Enrico Sartori *fl* Douglas Dickson, Laura Garrison, JJ Penna, Eric Trudel *pfs* Naxos American Classics © 8 559272 (73' • DDD)

The jury is still out ■ this exploration of a lesser-known area of Ives's output

I welcomed the first two volumes of the complete songs and tried ■ readjust to a situation where Ives is represented by a ■ of Victoriana as well as his groundbreaking innovations. Vols 3 and 4 also have a large cast of singers, many of whom work in opera. I am becoming uneasy about this decision since some songs emerge as over-projected and some of the singers have too much vibrato for concert songs of this kind.

Robert Gardner is again outstanding – his "The Indians" luxuriates in the mesmeric, visionary quality associated with Ives at his most personal. He's excellent too in the near-*Sprechstimme* of

"Like a Sick Eagle". Again in "Lincoln the Great Commoner" Gardner is monumental and sturdy, worthy of the subject. Patrick Carfizzi sounds rather brutal in "In Flanders Fields", the First World War song performed for ■ group of Ives's business colleagues with disastrous effect.

Robert Gardner begins Vol 4 with the epic philosophical declamation "The Majority" and battles his way splendidly through the fisticuffs of the tone-clusters. This was the first song of Ives's privately published *114 Songs* in 1922 – everyone was totally baffled.

I noted the eccentric choice of the fine countertenor Ian Howell in the first two volumes but I am less convinced by some of his songs here. In both these volumes the songs where Ives set a ■ in German – probably a student exercise – and later replaced it with English are performed twice, not always together. "My Native Land" is even performed three times by three different singers: the recent new edition provides alternatives for performers to make their own choices in a single song. Leah Wool is not nimble enough in "Memories" and this song should not have been divided into two separate tracks. Gardner is terrific again in "An Election". Ives's own ever-topical cynical text about the 1920 presidential contest. Kenneth Tarver misses the satirical element against academics in "The One Way" but "On the Antipodes" comes over splendidly with Ryan MacPherson and duet pianists Douglas Dickson and Laura Garrison. And Sumi Kittelberger delivers an atmospheric "Over all the Treetops", having performed it in German on the previous CD.

As in popular music of the period, Ives's Victoriana contains quite ■ lot of mother songs ■ well as coy love songs with some dreadfully sentimental texts. So these volumes are a mixed bag and as far as I'm concerned the jury is out on this side of little-known early Ives. I'll ■ back to it when I've heard the whole collection.

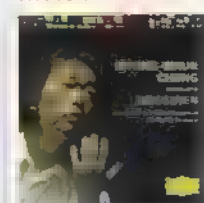
Peter Dickinson

## Messiaen

Trois Petites Liturgies de la Présence Divine.  
Hymne au Saint Sacrement.  
Couleurs de la Cité Céleste<sup>b</sup>

<sup>b</sup>Catherine Cournot, Roger Muraro *pfs*  
Valérie Hartmann-Clavierie *onde* Maitrise  
de Radio France; Radio France Philharmonic  
Orchestra / Myung-Whun Chung  
■ ② 477 7944GH (68' • DDD)

More of Chung's soft-focus approach:  
Messiaen needs ■ modernist edge



DG's in-house Messiaen expert Myung-Whun Chung leads performances of the niche *Trois Petites Liturgies* and *Hymne* as part of the label's centenary celebrations. Having just listened to Chung's account of the *Turangalila-Symphonie* for a Gramophone "Collection" (A/08), his idiosyncratic approach to Messiaen continues

to baffle me. His *Turangalila* is perfumed and standoffish, and this is another disc of soft-focus, overly precious Messiaen.

The *Trois Petites Liturgies* (1944) is one of Messiaen's more unassuming creations, a meditation on "three kinds" of divine presence. Messiaen himself described it as "above all [being] music of colour" and Marcel Couraud, in his classic 1964 recording (available in Warner Classic's centenary edition), goes to enormous efforts to delineate the interweaving layers of overlapping harmonic colours. Chung, in notable contrast, blends Messiaen's palette into a manufactured middle ground that robs the music of structural shaping and potential for light and shade. In the opening moments, the soft-pedalled chorus are made to fold seamlessly into Roger Muraro's piano obbligato, where Couraud demonstrates what can be achieved if the piano is allowed a slight edge. The ondes martenot is often pushed into the background, and the Stravinskian rhythmic push of the second movement turns into something more akin to John Rutter.

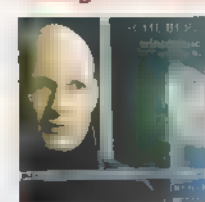
Chung's mission seems to be to deny Messiaen's modernism in favour of his debt to Fauré and Debussy. He gets away with it in the early Debussian, Dukas-like *Hymne*, but the more self-consciously modernist *Couleurs de la Cité Céleste* lacks contour and physicality. **Phillip Clark**

## Schubert

Winterreise, D911

Roman Trekel *bar* Oliver Pohl *pf*  
Oehms ■ OC810 (65' • DDD)

A second Trekel trek though this intelligent reading is worth rehearing



Roman Trekel has drastically rethought *Winterreise* since his Naxos recording (3/00). Gone are the often stultifyingly slow tempi and the intermittent air of lachrymose self-indulgence – also the absurdly resonant bathyroomy acoustic. Lopping 10 minutes off his former overall timing, his journey through Schubert's snowbound landscape is now one of the briskest on disc. From the urgent, inexorable tread of the opening "Gute Nacht", done with minimal *rubato*, Trekel's jilted wanderer has a certain clear-eyed detachment, even a sense of the absurdity of his own plight. The tenderness of the major-key final verse is shot through with irony (a hint of a sneer in the tone at "Schad" and "sacht"); the image of frozen tears in "Gefrorene Tränen" prompts a touch of self-mockery; and in "Im Dorfe" he contemplates the complacent, sleeping villagers wryly, exploiting the scornful sibilants in "Kissen". In "Im Wirtshaus" (No 21), Trekel conveys weariness without excessive slowness, flaring into stoical resolve at the close; and the last two songs suggest bleak resignation, punctured by ►



EDITH CHASE



Anna Netrebko: singing something for everyone



## Netrebko and friends delight in this adventurous selection of lollipops



### Anna Netrebko

'Souvenirs'

**Arditi** Il bacio **Dvorák** Songs my mother taught me, B104 No 4 **G Charpentier** Louise – Depuis le jour **Giménez** La Tempranica – La tarántula é un bich mû malo **Grieg** Peer Gynt, Op 23 – Solveig's Song **Guastavino** La rosa y el sauce **Hahn** L'Enamourée **Heuberger** Der Opernball – Im Chambre séparée **Kálmán** Die Csárdásfürstin – Heia, heia, in den Bergen ist mein Heimatland **Lehár** Giuditta – Meine Lippen, sie küssen **Lloyd Webber** Requiem – Pie Jesu **Messenger** Fortunio – Lorsque je n'étais qu'une enfant **Offenbach** Les Contes d'Hoffmann – Belle nuit, 3<sup>e</sup> nuit d'amour (Barcarolle) **R Strauss** Cécilie, Op 27 No 2. Wiegenlied, Op 41 No 1 **Rimsky-Korsakov** Not the wind, blowing from the heights, Op 43 No 2. Enslaved by the rose, the nightingale, Op 2 No 2 **Traditional** Schlof'sche, mein Vögele

Anna Netrebko sop with 'Andrew Swait treb' **Elina Garanča** mecz **Piotr Beczala** ten **Prague Philharmonic Choir**, **Prague Philharmonia / Emmanuel Villaume**  
**DG © 477 7639GH (62' • DDD)**

Something for everybody here. Netrebko is nothing if not adventurous in her choice of "lollipops", and sings in nine languages. Inevitably the Russian items come off best: the lovely little Rimsky-Korsakov song about the wind whispering love into the poet's soul, and then the "Oriental romance" of the rose and the nightingale. Both of these have been discreetly orchestrated for this disc by Andreas Tarkmann. The Yiddish lullaby "Schlof'sche, mein vögele" is done with great tenderness, as is the *Pie Jesu* from Andrew Lloyd Webber's Requiem. This is one of three duets, Netrebko joined here by the boy soprano Andrew Swait. For the Barcarolle

from *Les contes d'Hoffmann* she has Elina Garanča ■ hand ■ Niklausse; they make a convincing pair of Venetian serenaders. Even better is "Im Chambre séparée" from Heuberger's *Der Opernball*, heard for once in its authentic form as a duet, taken slowly but done with great style, Piotr Beczala contributing ■ nice turn ■ the youthful Henri, eager to learn about the demi-monde.

Of the other operetta items I preferred Netrebko's raunchy "Zapateado" from Giménez's *La Tempranica* to the rather effortful "Heia, in den Bergen" from Kálmán's *Die Csárdásfürstin*. Two French opera arias make a neat contrast: "Depuis le jour" from *Louise*, very

### 'For the Barcarolle from Les contes d'Hoffmann, Netrebko and Garanča make convincing Venetian serenaders'

dreamy, the words well defined, and with a beautifully executed leap up to the exultant "Je suis heureuse!" Then there is the little song from Messenger's *Fortunio*, a moment of quietness sandwiched between "Solveig's Song" and "Songs my mother taught me" – this done in Czech, to the apparent delight of the Prague Philharmonie, conducted throughout with gentlemanly care by Emmanuel Villaume. Although the fireworks of Ardit's "Il bacio" bring the disc to ■ exuberant finish, the introspective songs fare best. **Patrick O'Connor**

protest in "Die Nebensonnen", rather than a drift into madness.

Trek's intelligently conceived reading, combining sensitive detail with broad phrasing (mobile tempi make it easier for him to "think long"), is certainly one I shall return to. That said, I did sometimes miss the engulfing, soul-baring intensity of Fischer-Dieskau (with either Demus or Barenboim, both DG) or, more recently, Matthias Goerne, with Brendel (Decca, 9/04). While Trek's firm, freely produced baritone is a splendid instrument, his soft singing can sound merely mildly elegiac when the ear craves something more specific. Oliver Pohl is a sympathetic, highly musical partner, though he yields to Barenboim and Brendel in variety of touch and textural clarity. **Richard Wigmore**

### Skempton

'The Cloths of Heaven'

Missa brevis. Magnificat and Nunc dimittis (Edinburgh Service). Upon my lap my sovereign sits. Locus iste. O Saviour of the World. The Song of Songs. Adam lay y-bounden. Lamentations: How sits this city?; I am the man: The anointed Lord: For oughtest Thou, O Lord. He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven. Beati quorum via. Emerson Songs. Ave Virgo sanctissima. Ostende nobis Domine. O Life!: Nature's Fire. Recessional. Exon Singers / Matthew Owens org  
**Delphian © DCD34056 (70' • DDD)**

### Skilled and caring treatment graces this survey of Skempton's choral works



Music for piano and accordion may be the "central nervous system" of his work but recent discs suggest Howard Skempton's chamber and vocal output is hardly

less significant. This new disc gives an inclusive overview of his choral music and songs. The former ranges from the austerity of the *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis*, through the rhythmic repetition and harmonic accretion of *Locus iste* and *The Song of Songs*, to the subtle intricacy of *Ostende nobis Domine* and luminous ecstasy found in Yeats's *He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven* – a miniature masterpiece ■ be sure. The *Missa brevis* is a composite of these approaches – whether in the inward anxiousness of its *Gloria*, the surging ardour of its *Sanctus* or the plaintive supplication of its *Agnus Dei*. Highlights from among the songs include the formal yet fervent treatment of Burns in *O Life!*, methodical settings from Donne's versification of Lamentations, and the harmonic/melodic interplay of the *Emerson Songs*. Two organ pieces round out the programme, with the artless *Recessional* being ■ apt conclusion.

Music such as this is easy to kill with overstatement or dull with caution, neither of which is true of these performers: notably the mellifluous Bartholomew Lawrence in the *Lamentations*, and the Exon Singers, whose responsiveness is a tribute to Matthew Owens, whether ■ director or organist. The sound

provides an ideal ambience and presentation is on a par with earlier Delphian issues, making for a release in which Skempton admirers and newcomers alike will find much to savour.

Richard Whitehouse

## Vierne

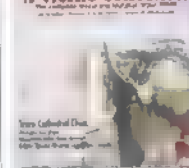
Messe solennelle, Op 16. Messe basse, Op 30. Messe basse pour les défunts, Op 62. Pièces de fantaisie – Toccata, Op 53 No 6: Carillon de Westminster, Op 54 No 6. Triptyque, Op 58. Les Angélus, Op 57<sup>ab</sup>. Ave Maria. Ave verum. Tantum ergo

Truro Cathedral Choir / Robert Sharpe <sup>org</sup> with Monica Brett-Crowther <sup>mez</sup> Christopher Gray <sup>org</sup> Regent ② REGCD263 (126' • DDD)

Played in the Father Willis organ at Truro Cathedral

The spectacle may be reined in slightly but this is a terrific from Truro

### A Vierne Collection



Intended to be performed by choir and two organs, Vierne's *Messe solennelle* is a spectacular setting of the Mass; that spectacle most powerfully conveyed in a 1987 recording (Motette, 10/89) in which Paris's Sacre-Coeur offers up such an awesome dose of reverberation that, once the first chord has sounded, virtually nothing else on the disc is discernible. Ten years later Hyperion came up with a rather more vivid recording from Westminster Cathedral (4/97) where clarity led to only minimal loss of spectacle. Now it's the turn of Regent which has not only moved into an altogether smaller building (although the Truro acoustic is warm and opulent) but taken away one of the organs, leaving the accompaniment in the exceptionally capable hands of Christopher Gray, now the cathedral's director of music.

The loss of the spatial effect from the two organs is not so keenly felt as one might think, largely because the Regent sound is impressive and the performance – this is Sharpe's CD swansong at Truro – so persuasive. The choir, always impressive on disc, come up with a tangible sense of idiom, and while Sharpe's four-square phrasing gives an uneasy stop-and-start feel to Vierne's innocuous setting of the *Ave Maria*, elsewhere he sensibly lets the choir have their head, and the results are unfailingly enjoyable. This is singing which stands comparison with the best choirs around.

Sharpe's own performances of the two *Messes* basse for organ solo show how Truro's matchless Father Willis can speak French almost like a native, and these are affectionate and suitably devotional performances, the full range of the Truro organ superbly captured in Regent's outstanding recording.

*Les Angélus* is unique in Vierne's output, a sacred song-cycle accompanied on the organ. Logistics – the singer cannot easily be in close contact with her accompanist – not to say balance, renders this difficult work to bring off. Possibly Monica Brett-Crowther is a little too

full-voiced and, at times, operatic, to convey the "unpretentious emotional appeal" to which the extensive booklet-notes refer, and the organ does seem to keep itself very much in the background, but these nevertheless captivating performances of a fascinating work and provide a valuable addition to this first ever survey of Vierne's complete output of sacred music for voices. Marc Rochester

## Verdi

Messa da Requiem

Violeta Urmana <sup>top</sup> Olga Borodina <sup>mez</sup> Ramón Vargas <sup>ten</sup> Ferruccio Furlanetto <sup>bass</sup> Teatro Regio Choir, Turin; North German Radio Chorus; West German Radio Symphony Chorus and Orchestra, Cologne / Semyon Bychkov Profil ② PH08036 (81' • DDD)

Fine soloists grace a vivid, forward-moving Requiem from Cologne forces



The truly great revolution in music-making in the past half-century has been the transformation of choral singing. The mind boggles at the thought of what a Russo-German Verdi Requiem such the one we have here would have sounded like 60 years ago. One swallow that did predict the summer to come was Ferenc Fricsay's trail-blazing 1953 Berlin recording of the Requiem (DG, 2/96), where the egregiously splendid St Hedwig's Cathedral Choir was joined by the newly founded RIAS Chamber Chorus.

On this fine new Cologne recording, Semyon Bychkov deploys two specialist German radio choirs shrewdly intermixed with the chorus of Turin's Teatro Regio. If Bychkov's reading doesn't quite burn white in the *Dies irae* as Fricsay's did, or Toscanini's, it is nonetheless a supremely well directed Requiem, scrupulously observed, meticulously prepared, vivid, lucid, forward-moving. If I have a reservation, it is that the recorded balance occasionally has one straining to hear how good the choral work actually is.

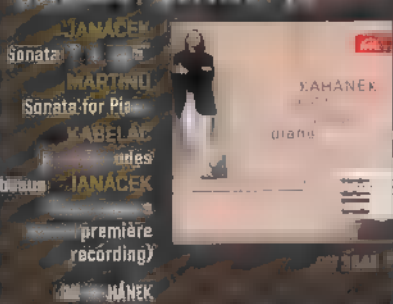
The Proms audience which was denied the chance of hearing the acclaimed new double-act of Violeta Urmana and Olga Borodina can catch up here. Borodina, who was unable to appear at the Royal Albert Hall August 31, is an eloquent exponent of the mezzo-soprano role, well matched to her younger colleague, herself an erstwhile mezzo. What Urmana's voice lacks in evenness in *legato* passages is more than made up for by her command of the *spinto* manner, the drama of the text vividly purveyed. Ferruccio Furlanetto, now in his 59th year, has lost none of his mastery of the *legato* style. He brings an authentically Italianate feel to the music, does *bel canto* specialist Ramón Vargas, here at his eloquent best.

Verdi's Requiem can seem a somewhat self-regarding piece, not least when "great interpreters" get hold of it. This reading, for all its distinction, gives itself no airs. Richard Osborne

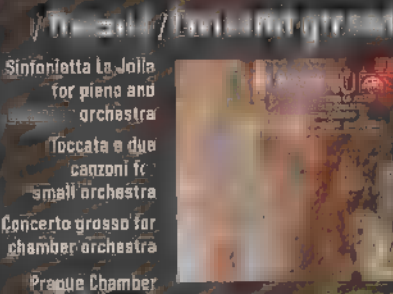


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Jan Sár / Vánoční / Kábeláč



Martinů / La Jolla



ONDŘEJ KUKAL

JOSEF HÁLA

piano

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Jean-Baptiste Wencker

**La Laitière de Trianon**

Joan Rodgers • Ann Seaton  
Jean Cohier

## LA LATIERE DE TROUSSE

Figure 1

transformation of the system.

1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 2073, 2074, 2075, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2080, 2081, 2082, 2083, 2084, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2088, 2089, 2090, 2091, 2092, 2093, 2094, 2095, 2096, 2097, 2098, 2099, 2100, 2101, 2102, 2103, 2104, 2105, 2106, 2107, 2108, 2109, 2110, 2111, 2112, 2113, 2114, 2115, 2116, 2117, 2118, 2119, 2120, 2121, 2122, 2123, 2124, 2125, 2126, 2127, 2128, 2129, 2130, 2131, 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135, 2136, 2137, 2138, 2139, 2140, 2141, 2142, 2143, 2144, 2145, 2146, 2147, 2148, 2149, 2150, 2151, 2152, 2153, 2154, 2155, 2156, 2157, 2158, 2159, 2160, 2161, 2162, 2163, 2164, 2165, 2166, 2167, 2168, 2169, 2170, 2171, 2172, 2173, 2174, 2175, 2176, 2177, 2178, 2179, 2180, 2181, 2182, 2183, 2184, 2185, 2186, 2187, 2188, 2189, 2190, 2191, 2192, 2193, 2194, 2195, 2196, 2197, 2198, 2199, 2200, 2201, 2202, 2203, 2204, 2205, 2206, 2207, 2208, 2209, 2210, 2211, 2212, 2213, 2214, 2215, 2216, 2217, 2218, 2219, 2220, 2221, 2222, 2223, 2224, 2225, 2226, 2227, 2228, 2229, 2230, 2231, 2232, 2233, 2234, 2235, 2236, 2237, 2238, 2239, 2240, 2241, 2242, 2243, 2244, 2245, 2246, 2247, 2248, 2249, 2250, 2251, 2252, 2253, 2254, 2255, 2256, 2257, 2258, 2259, 2260, 2261, 2262, 2263, 2264, 2265, 2266, 2267, 2268, 2269, 2270, 2271, 2272, 2273, 2274, 2275, 2276, 2277, 2278, 2279, 2280, 2281, 2282, 2283, 2284, 2285, 2286, 2287, 2288, 2289, 2290, 2291, 2292, 2293, 2294, 2295, 2296, 2297, 2298, 2299, 2300, 2301, 2302, 2303, 2304, 2305, 2306, 2307, 2308, 2309, 2310, 2311, 2312, 2313, 2314, 2315, 2316, 2317, 2318, 2319, 2320, 2321, 2322, 2323, 2324, 2325, 2326, 2327, 2328, 2329, 2330, 2331, 2332, 2333, 2334, 2335, 2336, 2337, 2338, 2339, 2340, 2341, 2342, 2343, 2344, 2345, 2346, 2347, 2348, 2349, 2350, 2351, 2352, 2353, 2354, 2355, 2356, 2357, 2358, 2359, 2360, 2361, 2362, 2363, 2364, 2365, 2366, 2367, 2368, 2369, 2370, 2371, 2372, 2373, 2374, 2375, 2376, 2377, 2378, 2379, 2380, 2381, 2382, 2383, 2384, 2385, 2386, 2387, 2388, 2389, 2390, 2391, 2392, 2393, 2394, 2395, 2396, 2397, 2398, 2399, 2400, 2401, 2402, 2403, 2404, 2405, 2406, 2407, 2408, 2409, 2410, 2411, 2412, 2413, 2414, 2415, 2416, 2417, 2418, 2419, 2420, 2421, 2422, 2423, 2424, 2425, 2426, 2427, 2428, 2429, 2430, 2431, 2432, 2433, 2434, 2435, 2436, 2437, 2438, 2439, 2440, 2441, 2442, 2443, 2444, 2445, 2446, 2447, 2448, 2449, 2450, 2451, 2452, 2453, 2454, 2455, 2456, 2457, 2458, 2459, 2460, 2461, 2462, 2463, 2464, 2465, 2466, 2467, 2468, 2469, 2470, 2471, 2472, 2473, 2474, 2475, 2476, 2477, 2478, 2479, 2480, 2481, 2482, 2483, 2484, 2485, 2486, 2487, 2488, 2489, 2490, 2491, 2492, 2493, 2494, 2495, 2496, 2497, 2498, 2499, 2500, 2501, 2502, 2503, 2504, 2505, 2506, 2507, 2508, 2509, 2510, 2511, 2512, 2513, 2514, 2515, 2516, 2517, 2518, 2519, 2520, 2521, 2522, 2523, 2524, 2525, 2526, 2527, 2528, 2529, 2530, 2531, 2532, 2533, 2534, 2535, 2536, 2537, 2538, 2539, 2540, 2541, 2542, 2543, 2544, 2545, 2546, 2547, 2548, 2549, 2550, 2551, 2552, 2553, 2554, 2555, 2556, 2557, 2558, 2559, 2560, 2561, 2562, 2563, 2564, 2565, 2566, 2567, 2568, 2569, 2570, 2571, 2572, 2573, 2574, 2575, 2576, 2577, 2578, 2579, 2580, 2581, 2582, 2583, 2584, 2585, 2586, 2587, 2588, 2589, 2590, 2591, 2592, 2593, 2594, 2595, 2596, 2597, 2598, 2599, 2600, 2601, 2602, 2603, 2604, 2605, 2606, 2607, 2608, 2609, 2610, 2611, 2612, 2613, 2614, 2615, 2616, 2617, 2618, 2619, 2620, 2621, 2622, 2623, 2624, 2625, 2626, 2627, 2628, 2629, 2630, 2631, 2632, 2633, 2634, 2635, 2636, 2637, 2638, 2639, 2640, 2641, 2642, 2643, 2644, 2645, 2646, 2647, 2648, 2649, 2650, 2651, 2652, 2653, 2654, 2655, 2656, 2657, 2658, 2659, 2660, 2661, 2662, 2663, 2664, 2665, 2666, 2667, 2668, 2669, 2670, 2671, 2672, 2673, 2674, 2675, 2676, 2677, 2678, 2679, 2680, 26

Figure 1. The effect of the concentration of the inhibitor on the rate of polymerization of the monomer.

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## Wert

Amen, amen dico vobis. Vox in Rama audita est. O crux ave spes unica. Providebam Dominum. Hoc es praeceptum meum. Benedicta sit sancta Trinitas. Hora est iam nos. Hoc enim sentite in vobis. Gaudete in Domino. Obsecro vos fratres. Jerusalem Jerusalem. Angelus Domini astitit. Domine tu es qui fecisti Collegium Regale / Stephen Cleobury  
Signum Classics © SIGCD131 (71' • DDD)

**A disappointing recital for a composer who deserves to be better served**



Giaches de Wert is best known for his madrigals and for the influence he had on the young Monteverdi, who served under him early on in Mantua. Whether or not

the ear is primed by such information, one certainly hears turns that come straight out of dense contrapuntal passages of the 1610 *Vespers* (though it's the other way round, of course). This CD presents Wert's second book of motets, the best known of which is the much admired *Vox in Rama*. As repertory, then, the disc is self-recommending; sadly, the same cannot be said of these performances.

Collegium Regale is an all-male choir of nearly 20 male singers, with countertenors on the top line. With such a name (not to mention the reputation of its director), ■ expects a very fine standard indeed, and the singers are indeed well matched in tone and in ability. It's all the more puzzling, then, that these readings fail almost entirely to gel. A telling symptom is the matter of rhythmic precision: ensemble in complex passages lacks either clarity or crispness, and there's little in terms of characterisation either. And far too often, an edit or a new take would have been necessary (two examples: the drop in intonation at 1'14" of *Benedicta sit Sancta Trinitas*, and the strange slide at the conclusion of *Gaudete in Domino*); from a production standpoint this could have been far more tightly managed. If this ■ a harsher judgement than I'm used to expressing, it's because greater attention to detail might have resulted in something very satisfying. **Fabrice Fitch**

## Wise • Gibbons • Locke

**Wise** The Ways of Zion do mourn. Magnificat and Nunc dimittis. Prepare ye the way of the Lord. How ■ the mighty fallen. The Lord is my shepherd. Service in D minor - Te Deum; Jubilare Deo. O praise God in his holiness. Blessed is he that considereth the poor and needy. Awake, put on thy strength, O Sion. Have pity upon me, O ye my friends. Open me the gates of righteousness  
**Anonymous** Voluntary for double organ.

A Verse to play after Prayer **Gibbons** Three Verses  
**Locke** Verse for the Organ  
Gonville ■ Caius College Choir, Cambridge / Geoffrey Webber org  
Delphian © DCD34041 (70' • DDD)

**Wise the hellraiser might have been more vigorously defended**



In 1687 Michael Wise was about to take up a position at St Paul's when he was killed by the nightwatchman at Salisbury Cathedral. The promotion to London is easy to understand, for however much of a hellraiser Wise may have been, his church music exudes the decorum of the Restoration at prayer. Though hardly ■ household name, Wise's name has been kept alive almost continuously since his death. The opening piece, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord*, is one of the most poised of this anthology: for all its quintessential Englishness, there are hints of the stately French style as well. The solo writing is assured and often full of character, as in *How have the mighty fallen*; but in ■ few of the more extended pieces, repetition is perhaps over-used. Of the organ pieces included here ■ refresh the ear, the most individual are from the pen of Christopher Gibbons.

These performances are workmanlike in the best sense: they give a faithful account of the music performed and convey something of its effect in its intended context; but the overall impression is rather subdued, even when the text suggests pathos, drama or grandeur. This may be due to the recording venue, but then the individual voices are sometimes unmatched in tone, which may inhibit the impact of the choir as a whole. As a contribution to a discography that still has many gaps, however, it is to be welcomed. **Fabrice Fitch**

## Bryn Terfel

'Scarborough Fair - Song from the British Isles' Songs by **MacColl**, **Stanley/G Williams** and **Traditional**  
**Bryn Terfel** bass-bar with **Kate Royal** sop **Ronan Keating** mtr **Sharon Corr** vn **John Paricelli** nylon gtr **Andy Findon** tin whist **Neil Martin** tin whist/uilleann pipes  
London Voices; London Symphony Orchestra / Barry Wordsworth  
DG © 477 7471GH (54' • DDD)

**Terfel takes us on an engaging musical tour of the British Isles**



The great Welsh bass-baritone is no stranger ■ the world of crossover, and it would be nice to think that the sizeable revenue this mainstream album will surely reap might encourage DG into recording him in the big Wagnerian roles he's been conquering over recent years. Of course, it's tempting simply ■ sit back and revel in the seemingly limitless reserves of golden tone and bomb-proof technique, but Terfel possesses such natural charisma and inspirational recreative gifts that one is compelled to sit up and really listen. Characteristically he lavishes ■ much care on illuminating the poetry as he does on shaping the melodic line, and it would be a stony soul that failed to respond to his endearingly whole-hearted delivery of some

(mostly) familiar repertoire. Personal highlights include the fragrant *Paving By* ("There is a lady sweet and kind"), that hauntingly lovely Welsh traditional melody *Cariad Cyntaf* ("First Love") and the ineffably tender *The first time ever I saw your face* by Salford-born folk singer and songwriter Ewan MacColl (father of the much-missed Kirsty). The duet with Boyzone's Ronan Keating in *Danny Boy* won't harm sales but the Irish pop star's weedy "X Factor" vocals are dispiriting in the present context. Still, if the collection succeeds in winning over an entirely new audience to the magnificent sound of a classically trained voice in its refulgent prime, then that can only be a good thing. The LSO under Barry Wordsworth lap up Chris Hazell's stylish arrangements, and DG's production is in the luxury class.

**Andrew Achenbach**

## 'Mary and Elizabeth at Westminster Abbey'

Byrd Ne irascaris Domine. O Lord make thy servant. Teach me, O Lord **W Mundy** Vox Patris caelestis  
**Sheppard** Libera nos, salva nos I. Second Service - Magnificat; Nunc dimittis **Tallis** Videte miraculum  
**Tye** Omnes gentes, plaudite  
**R White** Exaudiat ■ Dominus  
Westminster Abbey Choir / James O'Donnell  
Hyperion © CDA67704 (65' • DDD)

**Well-trodden repertory, but who'll complain when it's done in such style?**



Following the success in the Gramophone Awards of the Choir of New College, Oxford, this first-rate survey of old favourites suggests that collegiate institutions such as these continue ■ enjoy rude health, fears to the contrary notwithstanding. Conceived as a memorial to two royal sisters buried in the Abbey, it includes some of the strongest singing from boy trebles that I've heard recently. As ever, their tone conforms to the "house style", clearer and brighter than that of Edward Higginbottom's but with no hint of shrillness.

Undoubtedly the most impressive achievement here is Mundy's *Vox Patris caelestis*, which looks a rather unwieldy, sprawling thing ■ paper (and sounds it in some performances); here it is convincing formally, and the cohesion of the ensemble forces admiration, as indeed does the trebles' athleticism and stamina. For this alone this disc warrants the strongest recommendation. I'd also single out Nicholas Trapp, the treble solo in Byrd's *Teach me, O Lord*, and the choir ■ a whole in the opening and closing numbers, Tye's *Omnes gentes* and White's *Exaudiat te Dominus*. The different combinations of solo voices, organ and full choir offer sufficient variety to keep the ear fresh. As a showcase for English choral singing at its most charismatic, this deserves to be widely heard. **Fabrice Fitch**



# Opera

Salomé en français ■ Lully's Proserpine ■ René Pape, god and king

## Handel

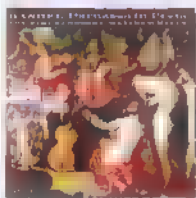
*Parnasso in Festa*

Diana Moore *mez*..... Apollo; Euterpe  
Carolyn Sampson *sop*..... Clio  
Lucy Crowe *sop*..... Orfeo  
Rebecca Outram *sop*..... Calliope  
Ruth Clegg *mez*..... Clori  
Peter Harvey *bass*..... Marte

Choir of the King's Consort;  
The King's Consort / Matthew Halls

Hyperion © CDA67701/2 (132' ■ DDD ■ T/t)

**Recycled music, maybe, but well worth hearing in such ■ fine performance**



In his exemplary booklet-note David Vickers echoes Christopher Hogwood and Jonathan Keates, whose excellent books on Handel have recently

been updated, in commenting ■ the undeserved neglect of this occasional piece. *Parnasso in Festa* was composed ■ mark the wedding in 1734 of Handel's favourite pupil, Princess Anne, to Prince William of Orange. A preview in the *Daily Journal* announced that the music was a mixture of "single Songs, Duetto's, &c. intermix'd with Chorus's, some what in the Style of Oratorio's". This was spot-on, as most of the numbers were recycled from *Athalia*, performed in Oxford the previous year but not yet heard in London.

The setting is Mount Parnassus, where gods, Muses and assorted hangers-on are gathered ■ celebrate the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, the future parents of Achilles. Much of the music is perfectly well suited to its new context. The Muse Clio's "Verginelle dotte", for instance, is a perfect analogue to Josabeth's deathless "Blooming virgins" in *Athalia*. And even when the sentiments are different – Clio's aria commending the happy pair to the care of the Graces is far removed from *Athalia*'s "My vengeance awakes me" – the result is not incongruous.

The cast is led by the superb Apollo of Diana Moore, a name new to me, who combines the range of a mezzo with the tone quality of a contralto. Her semiquaver runs in "Torni pure", one of the few original numbers, are thrilling. With admirable support from Carolyn Sampson and the rest of the cast, and crisp choral and orchestral contributions under Matthew Halls, this recording should ensure that *Parnasso in Festa* will at last come into its own.

Richard Lawrence

## Handel

'Sento brillar'

Ottone, Ré di Germania – Dove sei, dolce mia vita! Un disprezzato affetto. Arianna in Creta – Oh Patria! Oh Cittadini! Sol ristoroso di mortali; Bella sorge la speranza. Il pastor fido – Sento brillar nel sen; Caro amor, sol per momenti.

Ariodante – Overture; Oh Felice mio core! Con l'ali di costanza; E vivo ancora?; Scherza, infida; Numi! lasciami vivere. Alcina – Mi lusinga il dolce affetto; Verdi prati, selve amene  
Vesselina Kasarova *mez*  
Il Complesso Barocco / Alan Curtis

RCA ■■ Seal © ② ■■■■ 31871-2 (64' ■ DDD ■ T/t)

**The ghastliest 'Scherza, infida' on record is this recital's dubious claim**



Vesselina Kasarova bases her recital of Handel arias ■ music sung by the brilliant castrato Giovanni Carestini (who was regarded by Hasse and

others as the most perfect of singers). From her first few notes it is obvious that she does not have a natural or appealing Handel voice. She reins in her vibrato just about enough for that not to become an insurmountable problem, but other aspects of her singing are woeful: her performances are pervaded by poor intonation, swooping from underneath in the first notes of key phrases, inaccurate tuning on sustained notes and a lack of sensitive characterisation. Attempts at acting seem to be vaguely passionate rather than relevant to the context of each aria, and much of the singing is approximate, nasal, exaggerated and unsteady. Volatile or excitable dramatic situations suit Kasarova's bulging mannerisms better than the slower, gentler arias, which ■ spoilt by excessive *rubato* and lumpy articulation (eg the ghastliest "Scherza, infida" on record). At least Alan Curtis and Il Complesso Barocco provide expert orchestral accompaniments, although they struggle to stay on course while Kasarova's voice stamps over them in such a heavy-handed manner. The selection of arias that Carestini sang in Handel's seasons between 1733 and 1735 is reasonably well chosen. It is a missed opportunity not to have included some of the splendid Italian insertions that the castrato sang in the 1735 revivals of *Esber* and *Athalia*, or arias from *Parnasso in festa* or *Oreste*, but perhaps this leaves the Carestini/Handel concept available open for a more suitable singer.

David Vickers

## J Strauss II

®

*Die Fledermaus*

Peter Anders *ten*..... Gabriel von Eisenstein  
Anny Schlemm *sop*..... Rosalinde  
Hans Wocke *bar*..... Frank  
Anneliese Müller *mez*..... Prince Orlofsky  
Helmut Krebs *ten*..... Alfred  
Herbert Brauer *bar*..... Dr Falke  
Edwin Heyer *ten*..... Dr Blind  
Rita Streich *sop*..... Adele  
Sylvia Menz *sop*..... Ida  
Fritz Hoppe *spkr*..... Frosch  
RIAS Chamber Choir and Symphony Orchestra / Ferenc Fricssay  
Audite ■■■ ② AUDITE23 411 (114' ■ ADD)  
Recorded 1949

**Superb soloists and sense of ensemble – Fricssay's Fledermaus truly takes flight**



The history of complete *Fledermaus* recordings post-WW2 is generally considered to begin with the 1950 Decca recording with Clemens Krauss

conducting the VPO. This Fricssay version, though, predates it, having been recorded for West Berlin Radio at the Titania Palast in November 1949. It emerged from radio vaults onto CD in 1995 under the DG imprint. It has latterly appeared also in Membran's operetta series, and it now appears in this new transfer in Audite's Ferenc Fricssay Edition.

Its currency is fully deserved. Fricssay was a fine (and prolific) conductor of Johann Strauss, and his roots were, after all, as much on the Danube as Krauss's. If his *Fledermaus* Overture opens more soberly than some other versions, that serves merely to emphasise the excitement of the final *accelerando*. Throughout, the inflections that are so essential to a truly idiomatic *Fledermaus* come utterly naturally.

Though it will rule out the recording as a first choice for today, the sound quality is ■ good deal fuller than that of the Krauss version. There's the advantage of dialogue and sound effects too. Certainly the recording is a must for admirers not only of Fricssay but also of great vocalists of the past. It comes, moreover, from an ■ when singers knew their place. By contrast with today's recordings featuring international singers jetting in from around the world, this is essentially an ensemble production, showcasing leading Berlin singers of the time ■ much ■ the Krauss recording does Vienna singers. Peter Anders was a lyric tenor of immense grace, his career tragically cut short by a car accident in 1954. His Rosalinde is the young Anny Schlemm – only 22 years old, still a soprano, and wonderfully fresh-

voiced. There's the elegant Helmut Krebs, too, as Alfred. Best of all, perhaps, ■ Rita Streich, ■ sprightly an Adele as one could expect to find.

Even for those already blessed with a collection of *Fledermäuse*, this is not a version to be ignored. The expert remastering ■ by Ludger Böckenhoff, who also offers online at [www.audite.de](http://www.audite.de) a fascinating commentary ■ the recording. **Andrew Lamb**

## R Strauss

**Salomé** (original French version, 1905)

Sofia Soloviy *sop* ..... Salomé  
Costantino Finucci *bar* ..... Iokanaan  
Leonardo Gramigna *ten* ..... Hérode  
Francesca Scaini *mez* ..... Hérodiade  
Vincenzo Maria Sarinelli *ten* ..... Narraboth  
Emanuele Genovese *bass* ..... Nazaréen  
Giuseppe Ranoia *bass-bar* ..... Nazaréen; First Soldier  
Italian International Orchestra /  
Massimiliano Caldi  
Dynamic ② CD5572/1-2 (95' ■ ■ ■ = S/T/V/N)  
Recorded live ■ the Palazzo Ducale, Martina  
Franca, in July 2007

**Seductive, weird and decadent:  
Strauss has a truly Wilde time**



With the ink barely dry ■ his salacious ■ opera, Strauss started adapting its vocal lines to the eccentric French of his source, Oscar Wilde's play, in summer 1905. The French text

shimmers seductively and alliteratively in music that feels like its natural home; the inevitable softening of declamation heightens not just the weirdness and decadence of the story but also its comic aspects. Herod, ■ one level a self-portrait of Wilde, becomes a wry, blackly humorous, fallibly human character; Herodias and Salome seem even more perversely dangerous in their respective quests for revenge and sexual enlightenment. But French managements failed to endorse Strauss's frequent preference for Wilde's *mal français* over Romain Rolland's Debussy-inspired corrections and, by 1907, the composer's authentic *Salomé* was dead in the water, overtaken by a French translation of Lachmann's German libretto that fitted Strauss's original music. Only ■ 1989/90 came a researched revival of *Salomé* in concert, ■ stage, and then recorded by Virgin.

Thanks to Toscanini (who commissioned a translation for his country's premiere of the work based on Strauss's French version), Italians may well be more familiar with the notes of *Salomé* than *Salome* – which may justify Martina Franca festival director Sergio Segalini's casting of an almost wholly Italian cast. The performance starts nervously with shaky top notes and language (despite evident coaching) and insecure Strauss style. The orchestra sound like they're reading well rather than interpreting. Later Soloviy, the Ukrainian Salome, shows presence and gives a real performance of Salome's Todesliebe with Jochanaan's head. Gramigna enjoys himself as Herod. Caldi's players, ►



Le Concert Spirituel  
present a Lully  
world premiere

## PROSERPINE



Niquet generates  
visceral excitement  
and urgency in Lully's  
tragédie lyrique

## Lully

**Proserpine**  
Salomé Haller *sop* ..... Proserpine  
Bénédicte Tauran *sop* ..... La Paix  
Stéphanie d'Oustrac *sop* ..... Cérès  
Hjördis Thébault *mez* ..... La Victoire  
Blandine Staskiewicz *mez* ..... Aréthuse; Cyané  
Cyril Auvity *ten* ..... Alphée  
François-Nicolas Geslot *countertenor* ..... Mercure  
Benoît Arnould *bass* ..... Ascalaphe  
Marc Labonnette *ten* ..... Jupiter; Crinise  
Pierre-Yves Pruvot *bar* ..... La Discorde  
João Fernandes *bar* ..... Pluton  
Le Concert Spirituel / Hervé Niquet  
Glossa ② GCD921 615 (152' ■ DDD)

The fast trickle of new Lully opera recordings ■ ■ ■ run ■ ■ ■ course providing Baroque music lovers with some of the most enjoyable and revealing new discoveries currently to be had. Here, within a year of the appearances of excellent first recordings of *Thésée* and *Psyché*, we have *Proserpine*, in another world premiere, this ■ ■ ■ from ■ ■ ■ new source, Hervé Niquet and his Frenchier-than-French ensemble Le Concert Spirituel.

Lully's *tragédie lyrique* for 1680 tells the familiar tale of Proserpine's abduction by the underworld king Pluton, the upset it ■ ■ ■ her mother Cérès, and of the compromise solution reached in which Proserpine must each year alternate ■ ■ ■ months above and below ground. It is not much action on which to base a five-act opera, and indeed Lully's librettist, the ever-excellent Quinault, adds to it by building up Cérès and her love affair with Jupiter and adding a parallel pair of lovers,

Aréthuse and Alphée, with a rival for the latter in Ascalaphe. There is also liberal use of stage effects (including an impulsive role for Mount Etna) which we CD listeners will have to imagine for ourselves. Surprisingly, what it is not padded out with are the kind of extended decorative set-piece sung-and-danced *divertissements* that form such a large part of Lully's earlier operas. The insert-notes tell ■ ■ ■ that *Proserpine* marks the start of a new phase in the composer's operas, one which "developed the strictly musical aspect of his operas", and ■ ■ ■ supposes that its tightened focus ■ ■ ■ action and dialogue is part of that.

So too, presumably, is its sense of flow; the opera is a flexible mixture of arioso, dance and chorus, and Niquet clearly enjoys the task of joining its separate elements into a coherent whole. Perhaps in doing so he can be a little hasty with its conversational element, but the way he steers the music around its corners with no bumps and awkward ■ ■ ■ betokens considerable musical and dramatic involvement. And ■ ■ ■ ever he is capable of generating an almost visceral excitement and urgency, not just in Lully's glorious and imaginative choral writing but in the sensual urgency of his orchestral textures. The all-French-speaking cast does not contain stars but makes strong and convincing contributions throughout, with Salomé Haller, Stéphanie d'Oustrac, Blandine Staskiewicz and Cyril Auvity giving special pleasure. Indeed, this is a model "company" reading, one in which everyone performs as if it really matters.

**Lindsay Kemp**



following over-careful accounts of the Baptist's journeys to and from his cistern, gain authority and weight, like the recording, as the evening progresses. Overall though, the result, ■ preserved for repetition, is less than compelling.

The Virgin set (nla) places ■ rather understated Salome (Karen Huffstodt) amid a strong, lively all-Francophone cast. The performing standard is significantly higher than ■ Martina Franca but Kent Nagano's meticulous but passionless conducting robs the show of some bite. It's the safer bet if you want to study Strauss's reworking, but neither French set holds a candle to the German performances under Reiner (Guild), Krauss (Gebhardt and Decca, A/04) or Sinopoli (DG, 9/91). **Mike Ashman**

## 'Amoureuses'

Arias from **Gluck** *Armide*; *Iphigénie en Tauride*  
**Haydn** *L'anima del filosofo*; *Armida*; *L'isola disabitata*; *Il mondo della luna*; *Lo Speziale*  
**Mozart** *Lucio Silla*; *Le nozze di Figaro*; *Zaide*;  
*Die Zauberflöte*. Vorrei spiegarti, oh Dio, K418  
**Patricia Petibon** *sup* *Concerto Köln* / **Daniel Harding**  
DG © 477 7468GH (69' • DDD)

**The French soprano's DG debut ■ a considerable and attractive success**



Compared to some of her fellows – Natalie Dessay, Annick Massis, Sandrine Piau, Véronique Gens – French soprano Patricia Petibon hasn't made much of an impression here in the United Kingdom. Now that she has signed an exclusive contract with DG, that will no doubt soon be rectified. Here she presents an attractive recital of arias by Gluck, Haydn and Mozart.

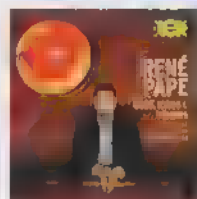
Five are by Haydn. In her aria from Act 1 of *Il mondo della luna*, Flaminia sings that reason must yield to love. Petibon is bright and confident. In Eurydice's dying aria from *L'anima del filosofo* she finds a quiet intensity; in the concluding aria to Part 1 of *L'isola disabitata* she captures Silvia's confusion without quite matching Linda Zoghby's nicely tremulous account for Dorati. A complete contrast is "Odio, furor, dispetto" from *Armida*, where Petibon brilliantly exploits the breathless short phrases to convey the sorceress's rage.

There are excerpts from Gluck's *Armide*, too, including a heartfelt air from Act 3. In the last scene, Petibon is mesmerising in the recitative – excellent support here, and indeed throughout, from Daniel Harding – before, again, bursting out in fury.

The Mozart numbers are not quite so successful. "Der Hölle Rache" from *Die Zauberflöte* is certainly fiery, but Petibon doesn't sound comfortable with the language. In the first aria from *Lucio Silla*, a dry run for Konstanze in *Die Entführung*, the coloratura is not quite secure enough; and having Barbarina's touching little plaint moving straight into Susanna's "Deh vieni" really doesn't work. Overall, though, this is a considerable success. **Richard Lawrence**



René Pape: *Les contes d'Hoffmann*  
It's just a little too new



Perhaps the leading bass of the day but does he miss the details in the devilry?

## René Pape

'Gods, Kings & Demons'

**Berlioz** *La damnation de Faust* – Voici des roses  
**Boito** *Mefistofele* – Ecco il mondo, vuoto ■ tondo  
**Dvořák** *Rusalka* – Běda! Běda!... Celý svět nedá ti  
**Gounod** *Faust* – Le veau d'or est toujours debout  
**Mussorgsky** *Boris Godunov* – Death of Boris  
**Offenbach** *Les contes d'Hoffmann* – Giulietta;  
Scintille, diamant **Rubinstein** *Demon* – Act 2,  
Romance **Verdi** *Don Carlo* – Ella giammai m'amo!...  
Dormirò sol nel manto mio regal **Wagner** *Das Rheingold* – Abendlich strahlt der Sonne Auge.  
*Tristan und Isolde* – Tatest du's wirklich?  
Wähnst du das?

**René Pape** *bass* **Dresden State Opera Chorus**;  
**Staatskapelle Dresden** / **Sebastian Weigle**  
DG © 477 6408GH (66' • DDD)

Pape is a good god, a good king and ■ still better singer, but as a demon he carries not the faintest whiff of brimstone. It was a mistake to open this recital with Gounod's Mephistopheles, who exults in his wickedness and is a great show-off. Pape's "Calf of Gold" is neatly sung at a breakneck speed but has no panache. His Serenade is a nice piece of singing too, but its verses have no malice, no sly humour, no satanic exhibitionism. For the demons of Berlioz and Rubinstein good singing will suffice, and certainly Pape's singing here is altogether admirable in its sonority, firmness and command of the *legato* line. He has ■ natural dignity of utterance and his diction is exceptionally clear, sampled on this record in five languages. If there

is a limitation in anything other than devilry it appears to be in depth of communicated feeling. As King Philip and Tsar Boris his expression is no doubt on the right lines, but in the absence of something more personal it seems to be merely applied. He applies the half-whisper at three points in Philip's monologue; in Boris's death scene he never fully imagines himself into the voice of a mortally stricken man who knows from the start that his last hour has come. As King Marke his tone is always sympathetic but hardly that of a

**'Probably the premier basso cantante of our time, René Pape is ■ good god, a good king and a still better singer'**

man sick at heart at the discovery of betrayal. The virtues of a genuinely distinguished singer, probably the premier *basso cantante* of our time, remain, and we respect the absence of anything cheap or unmusical in his singing. The programme allows him plenty of scope (though the Mirror song from *Les contes d'Hoffmann* was perhaps not so wisely chosen if it had to be transposed down to D flat). The support of orchestra and chorus from his native Dresden is an asset, and the recorded sound is excellent.

**John Steane**

# From the festivals

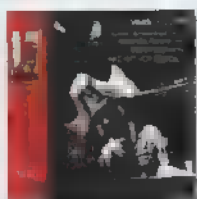
Mike Ashman listens to a selection of vintage opera performances and finds the good mixed with the bad

Orfeo's Bayreuth Festival series has been a hit-and-miss affair in terms of performance selection. In a curate's egg of a 1968 **Meistersinger**, Karl Böhm's speedy conducting mixes gossamer delicacy (Act 2) with surprisingly thumping crudity (in the Act 3 Festwiese "dances" everything goes haywire – radio balance, stage brass, chorus/pit ensemble). Only the lower **Meistersinger** are worth serious rehearing. Taking his role literally after the dress rehearsal, Theo



Adam triumphed. His Sachs has charisma and authority and is moved by his feelings for Eva and the crowd's "Wach' auf" acclamation without undue sentimentality. A subtle and not so heavy bass-baritone is better caught by Bavarian Radio microphones than in the contemporary Böhm Ring cycle. There's also a rare chance to hear Thomas Hemsley, whose serious, dark Beckmesser makes a well pointed rival, while Karl Ridderbusch sounds uncommonly mellow as Pogner. But, the super-sympathetic Bayreuth acoustic, Walther is too big a role for Waldemar Kmentt (although his fluid Mozartian tenor copes effortlessly with the high tessitura) and, despite gleaming commitment and a creditable fining-down of voice for the "Selig" quintet, Gwyneth Jones's generous weight of tone is a dream fit for much of Eva.

With Karajan's 1957 Salzburg **Falstaff** Orfeo are on safer performance ground, offering virtually the entire cast of the epochal Walter Legge/Philharmonia studio recording, honed in after performances at La Scala



and here accompanied by the Vienna Philharmonic. Gobbi's major assumption of the title-role – assuming you buy into the voice's naturally dark roughness – is given a favouritist manager balance by ORF engineers seemingly keen to put the dampers on the **Falstaff** roles and on Karajan's spirited handling of Verdi's *verismo* scoring. However, nothing gets in the way of Anna Moffo's Nannetta (she manages to be both sexy and pure), of Elisabeth Schwarzkopf (Alice) in her least buttoned-up performances, or of the rollicking final fugue. This third digital **Falstaff** of the performance is cleaner yet more **Falstaff** than the **Falstaff** Walhall transfer.

Karajan's scampering, Mozartian **Falstaff** of **Falstaff** – quite radical for the time in eschewing of Romantic fat or **Falstaff** – hardly changes over the six performances that may now be **Falstaff**. In the



theatre, like Mahler (and others), he omitted Rocco's "Gold" aria and included Leonore No 3 before the final scene. In this 1957 Salzburg performance he even realises a forbidden dream of his predecessor by segueing directly from the end of the inserted overture to Don Fernando's "Des besten Königs" recitative. The Italianate puppyish enthusiasm of Giuseppe Zampieri's Florestan is fresh and moving but the Salzburg performance is let down by Paul Schoeffler's tired-sounding

autopilot Pizarro, Christel Goltz's squally heavyweight Leonore **Falstaff** papery sound quality of ORF's broadcast. DG's 1962 Vienna performance (a first issue, it seems) is quite another matter. It employs – not coincidentally – the Florestan (Jon Vickers, his voice reproduced somewhat strangely here), Leonore (Christa Ludwig) and Pizarro (Walter Berry) of the then very recent Klemperer EMI recording. Leonore "live" is easy for the **Falstaff** Ludwig **Falstaff** her (always successful)

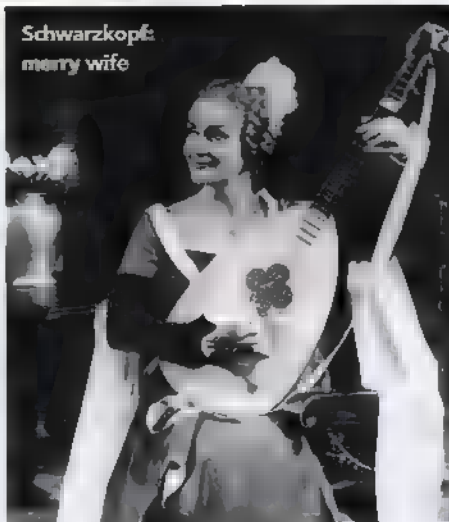


struggle for the **Falstaff** tessitura only adds to the tension of Florestan's wife's quest. The dungeon quartet and ensuing **Falstaff** reach heights of abandon **Falstaff** might never be suspected from this maestro, **Falstaff** VPO **Falstaff** fire, and the sound, **Falstaff** lustrous, is less boxy **Falstaff** on the Salzburg discs. This would join a short list of the opera's great performances **Falstaff**.

Period scale does not take a back seat in Eugen Jochum's 1950 Munich radio concert **Figaro**, which is fleet, with smart pointing from an appropriately reduced orchestra. The well drilled cast includes Benno Kusche (dry of wit and never over-ripe of voice in the title-role), a gem of a Cherubino from Sena Jurinac, and a never de trop Basilio (Alfred Pfeifle) who gets his Act 4 aria. Even voices more senior-sounding than cast nowadays live well with their words. It's a little



Schwarzkopf:  
merry wife



hard to recommend a 58-year-old German **Figaro** Anglophone readership but Jochum fans **Falstaff** Juninac completists should proceed with confidence.

**Falstaff** Rudolf Bing's "artistic administrator" at the Met and a conductor whose records seem to have **Falstaff** many writers. This **Don Giovanni** shows his experience on two continents in achieving a pacy performance in late-nineteenth-century conditions. Despite the **Falstaff** including only one Italian, style, language and weight of delivery are much attended to in George London's **Giovanni**, Eleanor Steber's touching Elvira and Margaret Harshaw's Anna. At Walhall's prices well worth



investigating but I hope the label will (re)issue the 10-track bonus here – the start of Bruno Walter's heaven-can-wait 1935 Salzburg **Don Giovanni** – complete in the much better sound it can be found in.

Walhall's extensive archive of post-1945 Wagner performance turns to important gaps in the discographies of master interpreters. After 1945 German Wagner-conducting split into two distinct schools: Franz Konwitschny's straight-as-a-die 1955 **Meistersinger**

(taken from the post-war reopening of the Berlin Staatsoper) has all the cool objectivity of pacing and expression found on **Falstaff** Eastern **Falstaff** of the border. But this was no great night for *bel canto*. By the time Josef Herrmann's Sachs reaches "Verachtet mir die Meister nicht" (in what was his farewell performance) he is



delivering his **Falstaff** albeit with great import, in a kind of Rex Harrison *parlando*. His Walther, Erich Witte, sounds like one of nature's Loges – which he was – although two years later he was to sing the part, and stage the **Falstaff** production, with a young Joan Sutherland at Covent Garden. More easy in their parts **Falstaff** the Beckmesser of Heinrich

Pflanzl and the Evchen of experienced Lieder-singer Ruth Keplinger. Only for the curious, I think, although more Konwitschny (his 1959 London **Ring**) may be waiting in the wings.

A 1956 Vienna **Tristan** also has some mauvais *quarts d'heure* where the intonation of veteran Rudolf Lustig's Tristan in Acts 1 and 2 leaves something **Falstaff** be desired and there are some over-distant balances for the Young Seaman (Julius Patzak, no less) and the shepherd's pipe (stunningly played). But the tenor's triumphant and harrowing Act 3, the pure and generous vocalism of the 39-year-old Gertrude Grob-Prandl (more **Falstaff** home as Isolde than in her over-regal Brünnhilde under Moralt) and, above all, the fiery conducting of André Cluytens make this set an essential purchase. Like many performances of this era, rehearsal **Falstaff** was (and **Falstaff** be heard to be) in short supply – even with an orchestra of this class, the Prelude and first part of Act 1 sound like **Falstaff** acclimatisation **Falstaff** for both maestro and players. But, after that, the sparks truly fly in a presentation of the **Falstaff** that is extraordinarily and aptly Beethovenian (and really dark!), not **Falstaff** all the luscious French sound-palette that one might have expected. ■



## The Recordings

- **Wagner** *Die Meistersinger* von Nürnberg Böhmer Orfeo ② ③ C753 084L (r1968 • ADD • 4h 16')
- **Verdi** *Falstaff* Karajan Orfeo ② ③ C772 (r1957 • ADD • 118')
- **Beethoven** *Fidelio* Karajan Orfeo ② ③ C771 082L (r1957 • ADD • 124')
- **Beethoven** *Fidelio* Karajan DG ② ③ 477 7364GH2 (r1962 • ADD • 127')
- **Mozart** *Le nozze di Figaro* Jochum Walhall ② ③ WLCD0236 (r1950 • ADD • 161')
- **Mozart** *Don Giovanni* Rudolf Walhall ② ③ WLCD0237 (r1954 • ADD • 3h 5')
- **Wagner** *Die Meistersinger* von Nürnberg Konwitschny Walhall ② ③ WLCD0234 (r1955 • ADD • 4h 24')
- **Wagner** *Tristan und Isolde* Cluytens Walhall ② ③ WLCD0235 (r1956 • ADD • 3h 32')



# DVD

Bernstein burning brightly ■ Pianists of the past ■ John Adams goes Atomic

## 'Vladimir Ashkenazy: Master Musician'

Film director Christopher Nupen  
Vladimir Ashkenazy *pf/cond*  
Allegro Films © DVD A09CND  
(160' ■ NTSC ■ 4:3 ■ 2.0 ■ 0)

**Nupen's self-congratulatory delivery is justified by films of depth and insight**



Each of the four sections of this DVD is prefaced by one of the director's idiosyncratic chats to us viewers explaining the background to what we are about to ■■■. Though these introductions are nothing if not self-regarding, Nupen has, to be fair, every right to be pleased with his achievements. He is ■ director in whose cultured and reassuring company musicians feel secure and relaxed. The results are films of depth and real insight – and already of some historical importance.

For instance, in the first one on the present volume, *The Vital Forces Are Russian*, we meet the young Ashkenazy in 1968 in the throes of moving his wife and small children from London to Iceland while fulfilling a hectic schedule of concerts – as ■ pianist, of course. I mention this for the benefit of younger readers who will know Ashkenazy only as ■ international conductor. This phase of his career is celebrated in the brief second section, a nine-minute montage of four orchestral movements taken from various other Nupen/Ashkenazy films.

More substantial is the previously unpublished film of Ashkenazy's lengthy, thought-provoking introduction to Rachmaninov's *Corelli Variations*, followed by a live performance of the work in Lugano. The DVD ends with the customary Allegro Films makeweight compilation of 33 short extracts from its catalogue. **Jeremy Nicholas**

## Leonard Bernstein

Beethoven Symphony No 9, 'Choral'<sup>1</sup>  
Brahms Symphonies<sup>2</sup> – No 1; No 3  
Bruckner Symphony No 9<sup>3</sup> Franck Symphony<sup>4</sup>  
Milhaud *Le boeuf sur le toit*<sup>5</sup>. *La création du monde*<sup>6</sup>  
Mozart Piano Concerto No 17<sup>7</sup>. Symphony No 39<sup>8</sup>  
June Anderson *sop* Sarah Walker *mez*  
Klaus König *ten* Jan-Hendrik Rootering *bass*  
Bavarian Radio Chorus and Symphony Orchestra  
with members of the Kirov Theatre, Paris,  
Staatskapelle Dresden, London Symphony and  
New York Philharmonic Orchestras; <sup>9</sup>French  
National Orchestra; <sup>10</sup>Israel Philharmonic  
Orchestra; <sup>11</sup>Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra /  
Leonard Bernstein *pf*

Medici Arts DVD ■ 205 7068 (6h 59' ■ NTSC ■ 4:3 ■ PCM stereo, 5.1 and DTS 5.1 ■ 0)

**Bruckner, Franck falls apart – but it's ■ Bernstein ■ his most compelling**



To celebrate what would have been Leonard Bernstein's 90th birthday, Medici Arts has appended some previously unreleased Franck and Milhaud items to four pre-existing DVDs. Sceptics will always ask what it is we are supposed to want from orchestral music on DVD, noting perhaps that whereas the sound quality here is remarkably good, the images, however well framed, are not of the digitised crispness we expect today. Well, one can always just listen. And the audio-only, hard-copy equivalents of most of these performances, as released by DG or EMI, aren't always easy to find.

With footage running from 1973 to 1990 it might be assumed that the earlier material would show Bernstein at his most compelling. I'm not so sure. The latest taping is drawn from his final series of concerts with the Vienna Philharmonic and it's profoundly impressive. Bernstein directed only two Bruckner symphonies in his maturity but, with his own health declining fast, he seems to identify with the unfinished Ninth as never before. His control over the orchestra is not in doubt and the confrontation with mortality is dramatised with flair. Or is it that for Bernstein the search for stable, meaningful tonality was itself a matter of life and death? Whether you find the results uncomfortable or revelatory, the players provide the rich-toned strings and gorgeous brass that define what we think of as idiomatic Bruckner-playing. The usually egocentric maestro is plainly conscious of this in the democratic manner in which he tackles his curtain calls.

The Franck from 1981 is at the opposite pole from the fleet-footed Gallic conception associated with Pierre Monteux. The Paris audience goes mad for the reading, unsurprising given the sheer intensity achieved, even if the work's structure falls apart. Incidentally, tasked with defending such subjective, Romantic interpretations in a DG booklet-note, musicologist James Hepokoski suggested that they "compel primarily through the magnetic force of the conductor's virtually sacramental, personal identification with the music". Bernstein believed in flamboyant revivification rather than a reconstructed stylistic accuracy. You have been warned.

After this the Mozart ■■■ surprisingly mainstream, the one-time virtuoso's part-time pianism in better shape than was often the case in

later years. The Brahms, disadvantaged by more restricted camera movements, attests to Bernstein's long-standing relationship with the Israel Philharmonic; its musicians play their hearts out for him. The Beethoven attests to his place on the world stage. The Ninth is the piece he conducted to symbolise the reunification of the city of Berlin on Christmas Day 1989. Historians and documentary film-makers will look on this as a totemic event, though DG will shortly be issuing in audio-visual form a tauter alternative, the climax of Bernstein's Beethoven cycle from Vienna. Admirers will want both. **David Gutman**

## György Cziffra • Benno Moiseiwitsch • Jorge Bolet

Albéniz Iberia – Triana<sup>1</sup> Bach/Busoni Prelude and Fugue, BWV 532<sup>2</sup> Chopin Polonaise No 6, 'Heroic', Op 53<sup>3</sup>. Berceuse, Op 57<sup>4</sup> Liszt Hungarian Rhapsody, S244 No 6<sup>5</sup>. Polonaise, S223 No 2<sup>6</sup>. Grand galop chromatique, S219<sup>7/8</sup> Rachmaninov Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op 43 – Vars 17–24<sup>9</sup> D Scarlatti Piano Sonatas<sup>10</sup> – K101; K96 Schumann Toccatas, Op 7<sup>11</sup>. Kinderszenen, Op 15<sup>12</sup>. Fantasiestücke, Op 12<sup>13</sup> – No 3. Warum? No 4. Grillen; No 7. Träume Wirren  
György Cziffra, Benno Moiseiwitsch, Jorge Bolet *pf*  
Medici Arts © ■ 5288  
(107' ■ NTSC ■ 4:3 ■ PCM ■ 0)

**Three great pianists on ■ offer an audio-visual reminder of a past ■■**



Cziffra's 1962 recital has appeared on DVD before. It's the one that opens with the astonishing "warm-up", an improvisation that ends with a veriginous Chopin C major Etude. After a powerful Bach-Busoni Prelude and Fugue in D major (not minor as stated here) and two skittish Scarlatti sonatas, we hear one of the fastest Schumann Toccatas ever recorded, reminding us of Simon Barere who, when asked why he played the piece ■ fast, replied, "Because I can". But you ain't heard nothin' yet until, after scintillating accounts of the *Hungarian Rhapsody* No 6 and the E major Polonaise, Cziffra launches into the *ne plus ultra* of piano circus acts, the *Grand galop chromatique*. Seeing is believing, though in the Chopin Polonaise that follows (from 1963) he seems disengaged, and musically completely misses the point.

After this, Moiseiwitsch seems to be from another age – economically, quietly singing his way through his beloved Schumann. The final eight Rachmaninov *Paganini Variations*, filmed two months before his death, are a ghostly souvenir

of one of the composer's greatest interpreters. Finally, the magisterial Jorge Bolet. How wonderful it is again that huge torso bent in concentration over the keyboard and the characteristic upward snap of the hands. *Triana*, Chopin's *Berceuse* and a steady, dignified *Grand galop* are all-too-brief reminders of this great artist.

Somewhat irritatingly, the menu does not allow you to view the DVD without interruption. For each of the 18 sections you have to use the remote to select the next part of the programme. It's like having to get up and down to change sides on a 78rpm disc. **Jeremy Nicholas**

## 'Peter Warlock: Some Little Joy'

Mark Dexter ..... Peter Warlock/Philip Heseltine  
Lucy Brown ..... Barbara Peache  
Maimie McCoy ..... Puma  
Georgina Rich ..... Winifred Baker  
Written and directed by Tony Britten  
Signum Vision ©  
(88' • 16:9 • PCM stereo and 5.1 • 0)

**A sympathetic film that captures the**

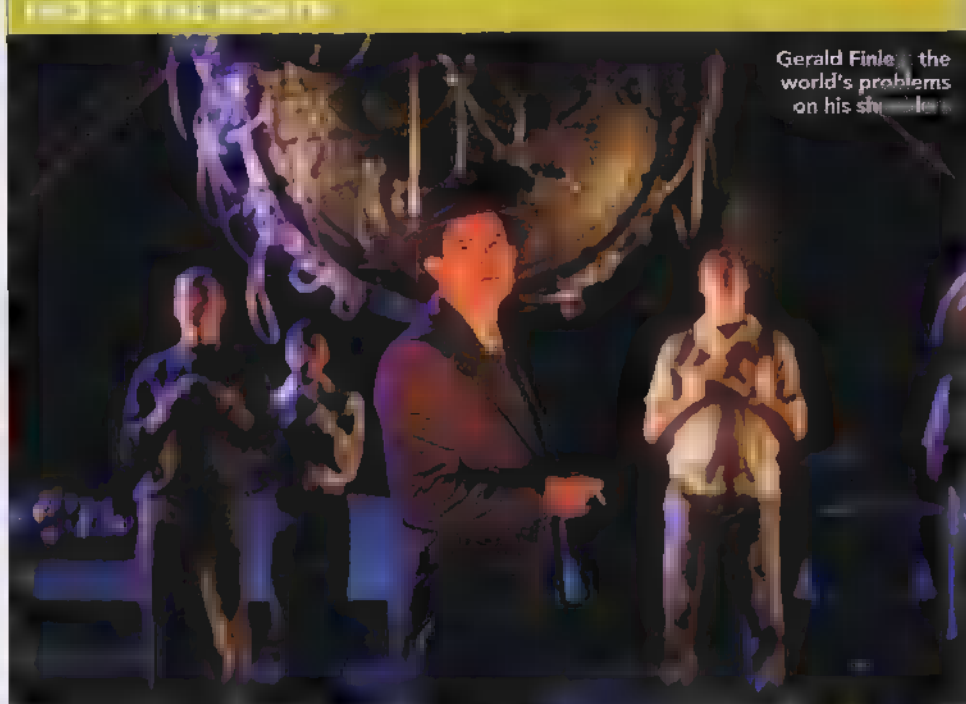
**wit and vitriol of a self-destructive soul**

Warlock survives through his songs and his memory is kept alive by the Peter Warlock Society. It was an ingenious idea of Tony Britten to involve society

members in his film and nowhere more effective than in the simple telling by Patrick Mills, chairman and founder, of Warlock's virtually certain suicide. Much of the action is set around pubs between 1925 and 1928, when Warlock lived in the village of Eynsford in Kent. Some of the more hearty songs benefit from being performed in pubs – an essential but often destructive environment for other composers such as Moeran, who appears in the film, and Lambert.

Mark Dexter as Warlock/Heseltine looks right and delivers a mesmerising characterisation that includes the self-destructive qualities that imperilled Warlock's career. He published vitriolic reviews and wrote insulting letters to establishment critics – the result was to destroy *The Sackbut*, the magazine he was editing.

The atmosphere of the 1920s is evoked with some magnificent vintage cars and trains; songs such as "Sleep", "The Fox" and "The Frostbound Wood" (John Mark Ainsley's Hyperion recordings) given sympathetic settings. The three principal women in Warlock's life are all convincingly portrayed, but the other should have been credited in the DVD booklet. However, Britten romanticises the role of Winifred Baker, who was described as inarticulate and "a lump of a woman, big with a bad shape". There is little of Warlock's role as prolific writer and editor who anticipated the early music revival, but overall this sensitive and imaginative film will make converts to Warlock and engender sympathy for those who had to deal with a man



Gerald Finley: the world's problems on his shoulders



**Adams's Oppenheimer opera divides opinions – but here receives a fine performance**



## Adams

### Doctor Atomic

Gerald Finley bar ..... J Robert Oppenheimer  
Jessica Rivera sop ..... Kitty Oppenheimer  
Eric Owens bass ..... General Leslie Groves  
Richard Paul Fink bar ..... Edward Teller  
James Maddalena bar ..... Jack Hubbard  
Thomas Glenn ten ..... Robert Wilson  
Jay Hunter Morris ten ..... Captain James Nolan  
Ellen Rabiner mez ..... Pasqualita  
Netherlands Opera Chorus; Netherlands  
Philharmonic Orchestra / Lawrence Renes  
Stage and video director Peter Sellars  
Opus Arte DVD OA0998D (3h 50' • NTSC • 16:9  
• PCM and DTS 5.1 • )

Includes bonus interview with Peter Sellars, mini documentary, cast gallery and illustrated synopsis  
I don't know if there's a causal link, but *Doctor Atomic* is the most dramatic subject matter of any John Adams opera and musically the most inconsistent. Indeed, the subject matter goes, *Doctor Atomic* could hardly be more apocalyptic. The work's principal character is J Robert Oppenheimer, the scientist who developed the atomic bomb during the Second World War from its earliest prototype through to the test bomb that was detonated in 1945 at a secret site in New Mexico. The opera's first act takes place a month before the test; the second act is the day itself, with a finale that strategically plays with our perception of time as the bomb is about to be detonated. Adams's first

opera, *Nixon in China*, rattled along with a note-specific clarity that flickered like newsreel; he paints *Doctor Atomic* in broader brushstrokes, using post-Bernard Herrmann suspense tactics and angsty chromatic swells to portray charged emotions. But an underlying weakness is the stubbornly unmemorable and melodically colourless vocal writing (the violin writing in Adams's Violin Concerto suffers comparable problems), leading to one-dimensional characterisations. Adams's and librettist Peter Sellars's decision to incorporate poetry by John Donne and Muriel Rukeyser into the opera only highlights the functional flavour of Sellars's own words as the balance is flipped towards

**'Gerald Finley carries the problems of the world on his shoulders as J Robert Oppenheimer'**

contrived artifice. No complaints about the performance though. Gerald Finley carries the problems of the world on his shoulders as Oppenheimer and the Netherlands Philharmonic and Lawrence Renes play like it's the best score since *Fidelio*.

**Phillip Clark**



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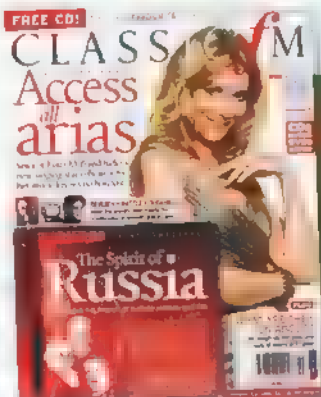
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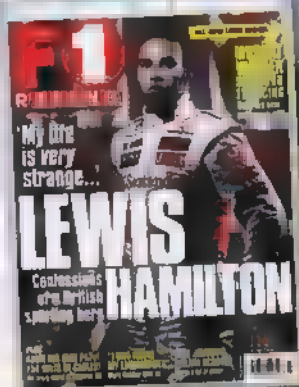
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# REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of reissues and archive recordings

## Taking a view on Beethoven...

# A clutch of Ninths

Three mid-century maestri offer ■ Choral compare-and-contrast

**G**uild Historical has come up with the novel idea of simultaneously releasing three broadcast recordings of Beethoven's *Choral* Symphony so that "the serious music lover has the opportunity to hear how three eminently great, but very different, conductors approached this Mount Everest of the orchestral repertoire". Those conductors ■ **Arturo Toscanini**, **Wilhelm Furtwängler** and **Fritz Busch**, with each CD including, as a bonus, the overture *Leonore* No 3 – or at least I presume that was the intention. In the case of Busch's bracing, classically conceived reading of the Ninth from 1950 (with the Danish Radio Chorus and Orchestra and soloists Lindberg-Torlind, Jena, Sjöberg and Byrding) what we actually get is *Leonore* No 2 (a 1949 relay previously on a Heliodor LP) although the box, booklet and note insist it's No 3. I'm assuming that the reference in Robert Matthew-Walker's analysis of Busch's performance was changed from "2" to "3" on the misunderstanding that he had typed a misprint. The Busch brothers' biographer Tully Potter assures me that there is no extant Fritz Busch-directed No 3. No matter, both performances are forcefully argued without sounding over-driven and, as Matthew-Walker rightly points out, both offer "commitment and rhythmic élan."

The Furtwängler performance is the oft-reissued BPO broadcast from March 1942 (Briem, Höngen, Anders, Watzke, Bruno Kittel Choir), similar in design to other Furtwängler Ninths that have come down to us, always malleable and filled with a sense of mystery. Though marginally sleeker than others, this particular performance is very intense (especially at the apex of the first movement) and well sung. Guild present it to us ■ part of a two-disc set that also includes a shattering wartime *Coriolan* Overture, ■ well known – and very revealing – Stockholm Philharmonic rehearsal of *Leonore* No 3 (1948), with a Concertgebouw performance of the full work from two years later, as well as ■ commercially recorded Berlin Phil *Egmont* from 1933 and two poorly recorded "live" fill-ups with the Buenos Aires Teatro Colón Orchestra (1950), Handel's *Concerto grosso* Op 6 No 10 in D (not No 11 in A as stated) with two movements omitted and, interestingly, its last two movements played in reverse order – which wasn't the case on Furtwängler's wartime broadcast recording. Guild also lists two excerpts from Schubert's *Rosamunde*: the first of the tracks (9) is, the second (10) definitely isn't!

The last of Guild's three Ninths also features Teatro Colón Orchestra, this time in 1941 under Toscanini's white-hot direction with the Colón Orchestra Choir and soloists Hellwig, Kindermann, Maison and, most memorably, Alexander Kipnis, a little beyond his prime perhaps, but still with ■ god-like vocal presence. Toscanini screws up the tension to near-fever pitch; it's an extraordinary traversal and nicely balanced by ■ cooler if hardly less exciting 1936 *Leonore* No 3 with the New York Philharmonic Symphony. Guild's careful remasterings tend to tame the impact of the originals (everything here has been out before in ■ form or another) though it's ■ palatable sound-frame. But turn to Pristine Audio's transfer of a 1936 New York Toscanini Choral and you soon realise just how much



information can be drawn from these sonically compromised airchecks. Tempo-wise there is very little difference between this Ninth and the famous 1952 RCA NBC Symphony recording that Pristine has also reissued (using truly "pristine" HMV "ALP" LP pressings) but the two orchestras are very unlike, the Philharmonic Symphony scoring especially high in the upper strings department, especially

in the *Adagio*'s more decorative passages. Here as ever one ■ a rostrum titan in absolute control, whereas the later performance, although excellent in its way, hasn't quite the flexibility or "singing" quality of its more distantly recorded predecessor. The perfectly adequate post-war line-up of Farrell, Merriman, Peerce and Scott (with the Robert Shaw Chorale) rings less significantly resplendent than Tentoni, Bampton, Kullman and (especially) Ezio Pinza. Do try this Ninth: like so many other NYPSO Toscanini broadcasts from the same period it counters the widely prevalent impression of the Maestro as someone who could never relax, musically, though if you fancy the post-war version, Pristine's warm, nicely aired transfer makes for a pretty painless listen. How fascinating though to hear Toscanini conduct one of his repertoire staples with three different orchestras.

Talking of Ninths, I was happy to encounter Beulah's expert transfer/remastering of Sir **Adrian Boult**'s first recording of Schubert's Ninth, a brilliantly executed performance (BBC SO), swift and breezy and, as almost always with Boult, acutely structure-conscious. I was grateful to discover **Anatole Fistoulari**'s 1944 *Unfinished* with the National Philharmonic, a fresh and dramatic reading though not quite as well recorded as the Boult. Beulah add Felix Weingartner's 1928 Basle Symphony version of *Rosamunde*'s Act 2 Entr'acte. However for me Beulah's star release has **Anthony Collins** conduct a programme of "British" music. Rarely have I encountered a more sensitively nuanced reading of Vaughan Williams's *Tallis* Fantasia, with ■ beautifully judged perspectives, or more luminously played Delius (the "Walk" from *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Song of Summer*). All are with the LSO whereas Sullivan's *Overture di ballo* (a superb performance), Gardiner's *Shepherd's Fennell's Dance* and Grainger's *Shepherd's Hey* are with the New Symphony Orchestra. Beulah adds Vaughan Williams's *Greensleeves* Fantasia, another memorable LSO recording. The transfers are first-rate.

### The Recordings

- **Beethoven** Sym No 9, etc **Busch**  
Guild Ⓢ GHCD2343
- **Beethoven** Sym No 9, etc **Furtwängler**  
Guild Ⓢ Ⓢ GHCD2345/6
- **Beethoven** Sym No 9, etc **Toscanini**  
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- **Beethoven** Sym No 9 **Toscanini**  
Pristine Audio Ⓢ PASC120
- **Beethoven** Sym No 9 **Toscanini**  
Pristine Audio Ⓢ PASC117
- **Schubert** Sym **Boult**, **Fistoulari**, etc  
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- **Various** Cpsrs Orch Wks **Collins**  
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‘Busch’s bracing,  
classically conceived  
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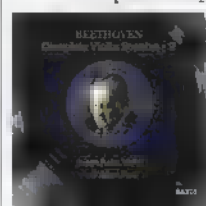
Collaborations of sweetness and musical poetry

**A**mong the less predicted delights of Naxos's "historical" series is a set of Beethoven's violin sonatas with **Joseph Fuchs** (who died in March 1997, just a few weeks short of his 98th birthday) and **Artur Balsam** at the piano, which is now two-thirds available. The nearest violinist to Fuchs



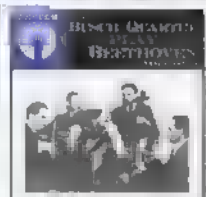
I can think of in terms of style is Szymon Goldberg. Both players favoured a profoundly classical approach and both produced a warm,

often sweet sound which never lapsed into sentimentality or called excessively on such expressive devices as vibrato or slides, which are always tastefully applied. Balsam was an evident soul-mate for Fuchs, musically speaking, and the first two volumes of Naxos's survey cover Sonatas Nos 1-4 and Nos 5-7, respectively. If sampling, I would advise opting for the second volume, which includes superlative performances of the first



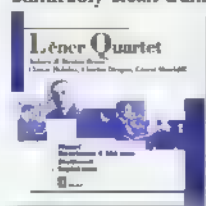
two Op 30 sonatas. The transfers, though a little muted, are generally excellent, but if Universal still holds library copies of American Decca's tapes, an alternative

DG release would be most welcome. And while I'm on the subject of American Decca, could DG offer us Decca's stereo Moiseiwitsch recordings of piano works by Mussorgsky, Beethoven and Schumann? I've never encountered them on CD here in the West and a box-set would be most welcome.



I would have expected that by now most discerning collectors would have settled for one or other reissues of the **Busch Quartet's** treasurable Beethoven quartet recordings, but if you have yet to discover them, then the latest release in Dutton's Busch Quartet series, which couples Opp 59 Nos 1 (1942) and 127 (1936), would be a good place to start. The transfers minimise surface noise while leaving a credible sense of studio intact.

The Japanese Opus Kura label has prepared admirably clean transfers of two further



chamber music programmes, the first showcasing the **Léner Quartet's** stylish 1939 set of Mozart's D major Divertimento (K334, with Aubrey and Dennis



Brain) in tandem with a leisurely and just occasionally plodding 1930 Beethoven Septet (with Claude Hobday, Charles Draper and Aubrey Brain). **Jacques**

**Thibaud's** second HMV recording of Franck's Violin Sonata with **Alfred Cortot** shares the second Opus Kura disc with Cortot's eloquently phrased 1931 recording of Chausson's *Concert*, again with Thibaud who heads an accomplished studio string quartet (Isnard, Voulfma, Blanpain, Eisenberg). Both performances marry interpretative fire with a brand of musical poetry that while not quite extinct (at least not while Murray Perahia is playing) has become rarer by the year.

### The Recordings

- **Beethoven** Vn Sns, Vol 1 **Fuchs, Balsam**  
Naxos © 8 111251
- **Beethoven** Vn Sns, Vol 2 **Fuchs, Balsam**  
Naxos © 8 111252
- **Beethoven** Stg Qts, Vol 3 **Busch Qt**  
Dutton © CDBP9786
- **Beethoven, Mozart** Chbr Wks **Léner Qt et al**  
Opus Kura © OPK2078
- **Chausson, Franck** Chbr Wks **Thibaud, Cortot** et al  
Opus Kura © OPK2077

## TWO PIANO MASTERS

Sofronitzky and Serkin in treasurable collections

**O**f all the "Historical Russian Archive" collections so far released by Brilliant Classics none surely are more valuable than a nine-CD anthology of mostly live recordings by the pianist **Vladimir Sofronitzky**. True, we have already had a couple of smaller collections (from Melodiya/BMG and Philips) but nothing to rival this, even though the

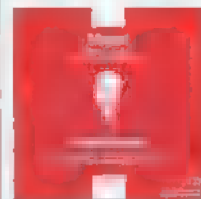


transfers are somewhat airless. Sofronitzky was adored in his homeland, understandably so given the evidence here: he was Alexander Scriabin's son-in-law and his

performances of three Scriabin Sonatas (Nos 3, 9 and 10, plus the *Andante* of No 2), *Poème satanique* and numerous shorter pieces testify to a comprehensive understanding of this often complex music. Sofronitzky's Chopin is wilful but more often than not inspired, his set of the

Op 28 Preludes ■ rich in tonal variety and temperament as Cortot's, his accounts of various Polonaises and (especially) Mazurkas ■ fair match for the young Rubinstein. Brilliant also gives us Liszt (including Schubert song transcriptions), Mendelssohn, Beethoven (Sonata Op 28), Schumann (*Bunte Blätter, Carnaval*), Borodin (*Petite suite*), Prokofiev and Rachmaninov but for me the real prizes, aside from the Chopin and Scriabin items, are the recordings of Schubert's *Wanderer* Fantasy and two Sonatas, in A minor, D784, and in B flat, D960. Sofronitzky's D960 is quite different to any other I've heard, the *Andante sostenuto* visited by a humbling sense of tragedy. The recordings date from between 1946 and 1960 and there are excellent notes by Ateş Orga. Next up please from this "Archive" series, a recorded overview of the conductor Nikolai Golovanov.

Talking of "series", we desperately need a complete collection of **Rudolf Serkin's** Mozart



concertos for CBS/Sony but in the meantime United Archives have come up with a superb double-pack consisting of the concertos K413, 414, 451 and 453, all bar the last being under the baton of Alexander Schneider (K453 is conducted by George Szell). This was the period of Serkin's rich prime (1955-57) and the performances have a deftness, poise and elegance that in later years gave way to occasional over-emphases. First-rate transfers, too, and K413 is in excellent stereo. ●

### The Recordings

- **Various Cpsrs** Historical Russian Archives **Sofronitzky**  
Brilliant Classics © © 8975
- **Mozart** Pf Concs **Serkin**  
United Archives © © UAR020



# Books

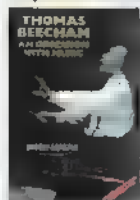
Beecham's Story • McCabe and his music • Opera singers from A to Z

## Thomas Beecham

An Obsession with Music

By John Lucas

Boydell, HB, 388pp, £25/\$47. ISBN 1-843-83402-1



On January 21, 1909, in London's Queen's Hall, the 29-year-old Thomas Beecham launched the first of his hand-picked, personally financed new orchestras: the immodestly billed Beecham Symphony Orchestra.

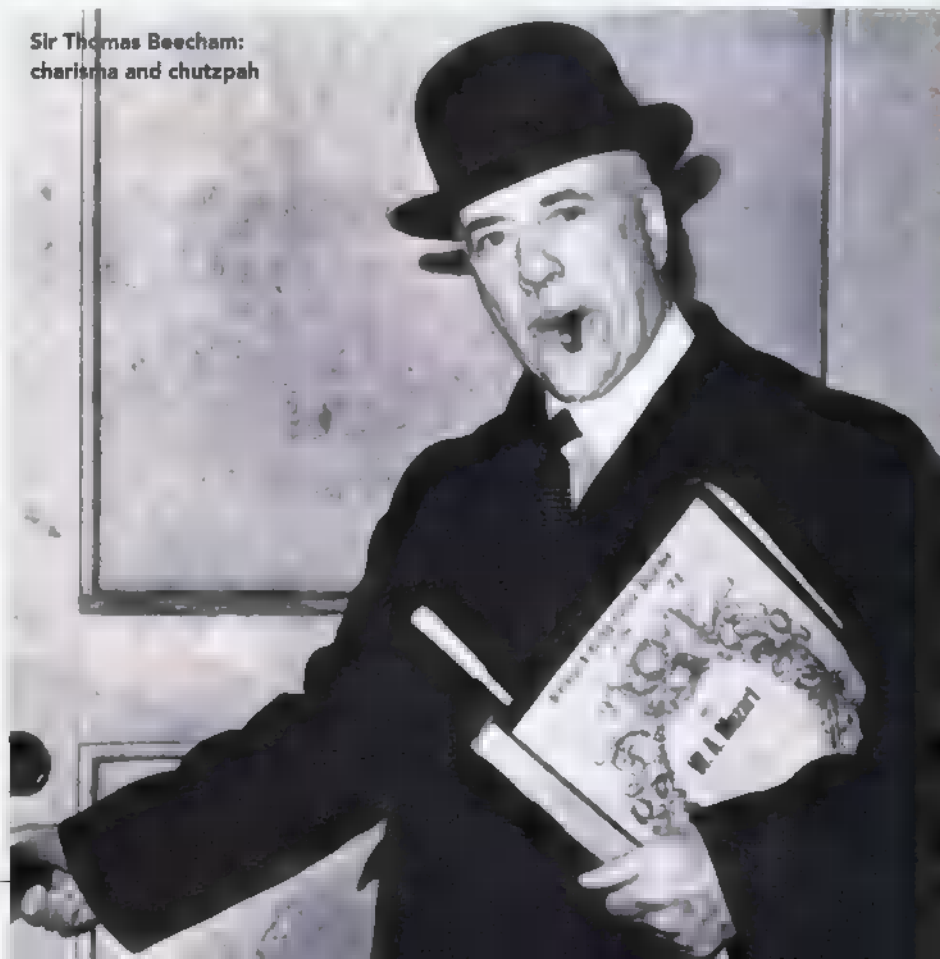
On October 6 they opened their first nationwide tour with a concert in Cardiff. Beecham obviously made a huge impression, for on August 21, 1911, it was announced that he was appointed conductor of the Cardiff Orchestral Society, in order to "raise the prestige of Cardiff as a musical centre". As a Cardiffian born and bred (albeit half a century later) this was complete news to me. Surely something so momentous would have left an echo in my city's cultural memory? But just five pages later in John Lucas's amazingly detailed biography the sorry truth emerges. Readers of Cardiff's *Western Mail* (let alone the *Daily Mirror* and *News of the World*) had been treated to every twist and

turn of a sensational two-week divorce case, at the end of which, on October 28, 1911, the married Beecham was found guilty of committing adultery with Maud, Mrs George Foster, a young American society artist he'd first met on March 21, 1909, when she was painting his father-in-law's portrait! Her husband successfully divorced her (even though the affair was long over) whereas Uta Beecham refused to divorce her husband (even though he was already well embarked on a public affair with another American Maud, the fabulously rich Lady Cunard). Beecham was unceremoniously dumped by Cardiff (before conducting a single concert) to be immediately replaced by "the greatest conductor living": Sir Henry Wood. So what price musical prestige when it threatens municipal morality? Beecham did go on stage at a less-than-full Birmingham Town Hall on November 22, but on registering the lukewarm applause he elicited, turned flamboyantly to the city's orchestra and before the upbeat to Beethoven's exuberant Symphony No 8 instructed drily: "Let me pray".

Similar three-year snapshots (forgiving my local gloss) could be taken innumerable times and at any stage during Beecham's tempestuous

career. He moves from venture to spectacular venture dogged by labyrinthine marital entanglements and breathtaking financial scandals but sustained by cutting wit, invincible self-belief and an inimitable blend of musical charisma and personal chutzpah. And what the vignette painted above leaves out is any idea of the most important musical events in Beecham's 1909-11 diaries: the British premieres of Strauss's *Elektra*, *Salome* and *Feuersnot* at Covent Garden (with *Rosenkavalier* and *Ariadne* to follow in 1913); the world premiere of Delius's *A Mass of Life* and British premiere of *A Village Romeo and Juliet*; the return to the London stage of *Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *Così fan tutte* and *Impresario* in "modern" performances; and getting his BSO installed for Diaghilev's first Ballets Russes seasons in London and Berlin. Just how he found the energy and ingenuity to visit so many bankers and bedrooms at the same time is beyond any normal human comprehension. Could he, with all his foibles, conduct the same career today? He reminds me inescapably of his near-contemporary Winston Churchill – and the answer, as in his case, is probably not. But as the CD of rehearsal extracts enclosed with this brilliant and balanced book makes all too clear, not to speak of the recorded legacy itself, the loss is entirely and immeasurably ours. **Gerald Lewis**

Sir Thomas Beecham: charisma and chutzpah



## Landscapes of the Mind

The Music of John McCabe

Edited by George Odum

Guildhall School of Music • Drama, PB, 276pp, £35

ISBN 0-7546-5816-0



In the foreword the late (and much missed) Vernon Handley admirably encapsulates what makes John McCabe's music so appealing and enduring. For Handley, McCabe's integrity is paramount and that his music doesn't need to shock in order to succeed; also that McCabe is not only a creator but a performer (a fine pianist, of course). If this soft-cover publication has a slightly text-book-like appearance to it (perhaps not inappropriate given the source), then what lies inside is a thoroughly readable and illuminating examination of McCabe's considerable output, that also provides revealing background and an interview with the composer.

The book is thoughtfully prepared and well compiled. A chapter on McCabe's early years and then on his development as a pianist and composer set the reader up nicely to then



explore his music. His large catalogue of works is divided into chapters on orchestral and concertante scores, chamber music for strings and for winds, and then his pieces for brass, piano and the voice as well as film, theatre and television. The inclusion of the latter (running to 17 pages) may surprise; yet McCabe has not only written a children's opera and three full-length ballet scores, he has also composed for film (including Hammer's *Fear in the Night*) and television (an advertisement for Michelin tyres!).

With seven main contributors bringing specialisation and variety to the text, the book is an admirable discourse on McCabe's music. Each writer has the ability both to analyse and to bring the music alive – prompting the inner ear into action if the music is known or galvanising the reader to become familiar with a particular piece. The discography of McCabe's music is therefore invaluable (and copious enough to include LP and cassette numbers!) and there is a further one for McCabe the pianist (a telling reminder of his wide-ranging sympathies and his versatility as a performer). There is also a complete listing of McCabe's works.

With numerous photographs (including McCabe as a youngster and of family members) and music examples, the text is favourably complemented. The book therefore is a handsome tribute to a splendid composer as he nears his 70th birthday (he was born on April 21, 1939, in the Huyton area of Liverpool, where he was imbued into an artistic community that extended beyond music). McCabe is a creator often inspired by extra-musical stimuli and one whose compositional processes are an attractive mix of rigour and instinct. On its release I intended merely to sample Hyperion's issue of McCabe's String Quartets Nos 3, 4 and 5, and played the whole disc! And his orchestral music

certainly stimulates the landscapes of the mind to which the publication's title alludes (and which was McCabe's own suggestion). Reading about pieces that have made an impact (*The Chagall Windows* and *Concerto for Orchestra*, for example) brought to the privacy of one's head sounds, lyricism and energies that seemed recognisably by McCabe and from those particular works.

A fine reference and tribute, then, to a composer who, quoting Handley, "can tear up the earth...but never with easily obtained fireworks" and who is still writing "an unending source of delightful and stimulating music".

Colin Anderson

## The Grove Book of Opera Singers

Edited by Laura Macy

Oxford University Press, HB, 640pp,  
£19.99/\$39.95. ISBN 0-19-533765-5



It's a pity Stanley Sadie could not have lived to see this for it was his idea, mooted about 20 years ago and then shelved because, first, of the imminent production of *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* (1992) and

then the great and all-consuming enterprise of *The New Grove* in 29 volumes (2001). He was editor of both and, when he left, not well satisfied with certain directions the work was compelled to take, he still had in mind the book of singers a job not done. Discussion in the preliminary meetings was very much along the lines of "who's in, who's out". It was a question of how inclusive the book should be. I remember the name of Fanny Anitua came up a kind of test-case. She was the Carmen of an early complete recording and, more importantly, the mezzo-soprano who, in Italy, sang the Rossini roles which at that time had been relinquished to the sopranos. The objection that nobody remembers her now was countered by the argument that this, if true, only strengthened the case for her inclusion. In *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* she accordingly won entry; in *The Grove Book of Opera Singers* she is omitted.

Perhaps Anitua does not matter (her name arose as a random example), but Fernand Anseau and Frances Alda do. They also are missing despite entries in *New Grove Opera*, he (a Belgian) the most admired "French" tenor of his time, she one of the foremost sopranos at the Metropolitan in the age of Caruso and later. Meanwhile Donald Adams has kept his place, certainly a well loved singer over here but one whose career centred on the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, and who was relatively little known abroad. Other "A"s include Paul Agnew, Marie Angel, Charles Anthony and Jeanette Altmeyer.

Generally at work here is the common principle of the survival of the living and still

active and the gradual sifting out of names from the past: inevitable perhaps but I think regrettable. At the other end of the time-spectrum, important singers from Handel's age and Mozart's have very generous coverage, so that possibly the longest entry in the book is Farinelli's: five columns or roughly 2000 words compared with (say) some 350 words for Chaliapin. This seems not quite right.

That said, the very mention of these names is enough, I would hope, to whet the appetite and suggest something of the book's scope. An inexhaustible mine of information, it is also an engrossingly good read. Comment and opinion enliven the entries, the print is clear and the illustrations are finely reproduced. Many of the contributors will be familiar to readers of *Gramophone* and the whole they ensure that, where relevant, the singer's recordings have a place in the account. There must be at least 100 writers involved, with some allotted to particular periods or schools. Thus Winton Dean is responsible for many of the 18th-century singers, Desmond Shawe-Taylor for best part of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Harold Rosenthal for the middle years of the 20th, Alan Blyth for the later, Richard Wigmore for those of the present day. Most tireless and ubiquitous of all the contributors is Elizabeth Forbes whose enthusiasm is as comprehensive as her knowledge. It is good to see from early editions of *Grove* names such as JA Fuller Maitland (and I can't help wishing that his first-hand account of Sir Charles Santley had been retained). Good too to the entry for John Coates and find beneath it the name of Gerald Moore.

In reviewing such a large-scale and prestigious work of reference it seems inevitable that disproportionate space is given to grumbles, and I have one more. I wish more had been given to bibliographies, or at least that contributors had been afforded an opportunity to update those for which they were responsible. It would also have been better if books by the singers themselves had been included (even given priority) in the bibliography rather than left to be mentioned (or not) in the body of the text.

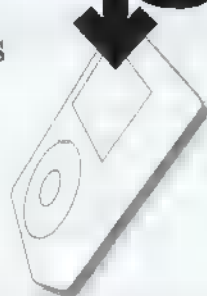
And now, in justice, I should begin afresh but this time on a catalogue of riches. Or perhaps we might entice by way of a quiz. First question: what famous tenor, having been poorly received in his native city, resolved never to sing there again? Second: who, though allegedly "short and squat, with a doughy coarse face" became the prima donna of her day and spent the last years of her life making buttons in Bologna? Third: over the door of whose house in Italy was inscribed the information that "the folly of the English had laid its foundations"? And last: what did Bryn Terfel do when he found the role of Wozzeck made excessive demands? For answers, see below. **John Steane**

Answers: Enrico Caruso, Francesca Cuzzoni, Senesino, cancelled.



# Tune surfing

James Jolly on a stunning transfer of Cantelli's last NBC concert, Pristine's Ambient Stereo, a wealth of lossless music, Gramophone's own 'label' and a not-so-clever Genius



One of the dangers of the record catalogue, and the need to weigh one disc against the next, is that there are certain recordings that hold such an unassailable position that they tend to obscure the fact that there are numerous ways of interpreting every piece of music. For people of my generation, the arrival of the DG recording of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony with the Vienna Philharmonic under Carlos Kleiber made such an impression that few other recordings seem to get a look-in – it has become a kind of knee-jerk recommendation (though it certainly doesn't disappoint!). The thought is prompted because as I write this I'm listening (for the second time on the trot) to a quite astounding performance of the Beethoven Fifth with the NBC Symphony Orchestra under Guido Cantelli, his last concert with the orchestra before it was disbanded on Toscanini's death in 1954. Cantelli himself was killed in a plane crash a couple of years later, ending a career that would no doubt have taken him right to the top of the profession. He is held in extraordinary regard by Toscanini, who clearly saw in him his natural successor – apparently the first time the old man heard his young countryman conduct he turned to his companion and said to him, "That's me conducting!"

The concert took place on February 21, 1954, and also contained a thrilling reading of Stravinsky's *Le chant du rossignol*. Cantelli's conducting style has an urgency and high-wire tension that Toscanini must have been drawn to, but it also has a songfulness and lyricism that is very appealing. And this Beethoven Fifth, taut and

lithe, sounds quite terrific in its latest incarnation from Pristine Classical, hence its inclusion in this column. Andrew Rose, Pristine's founder and "patron", has been busy not only developing new ways of enhancing the historic recordings he remasters, but also attracting some of the great names in the field to his "label" – more anon.

The transfer of this Cantelli concert is Rose's own handiwork, and as well as applying his XR transfer technique, which has given the recording impressive presence and detail, he has used what he styles Ambient Stereo. Explaining the system, Rose writes that "with mono recordings, such as the vast majority to be found at Pristine Classical, it offers something quite new – and sonically very interesting indeed. Now we have the ability to extract from a mono recording that same room ambience and spread it into the stereo field – in a very natural and neutral way. The direct signal (ie the original mono sound of the musicians) is preserved and is tonally unchanged. What appears to the listener is a whole new sense of place, and a degree of 'air' around the performers which is entirely believable and consistent with the recording." Listening to some of his Ambient Stereo transfers you really *do* seem to hear the music spread out between the speakers – though kept fairly central – and there's even a clear sense of depth (and the recordings were most definitely mono in origin). Listening to the detail in the Stravinsky, I was struck by the immediacy of the wind and brass – it has great presence and each instrument seems to occupy its own "space". I needed to keep reminding myself that this concert took place 54 years ago, and vital is the sound (and so vivid is the playing).

I listened to it as a lossless FLAC file via both a downloaded WinAmp player and the speakers attached to my PC, and also through my hi-fi using my Squeezebox. Each time I was amazed



Guido Cantelli was tragically struck down in his prime

by the combination of great music-making and the vividness of the sound. The concert is available as an MP3 file (£7), 16-bit FLAC (£9) and 24-bit FLAC (£15) – and if you intend to store your music on disc you'll need to burn to a DVD for the 24-bit file.

Other recordings I've been enjoying in Pristine's Ambient Stereo as FLAC files are Gerhard Husch's 1934 *Die schöne Müllerin* and a gloriously autumnal and mellow 1951 New York Philharmonic Brahms Second conducted by Bruno Walter. Looking back to our April 1956 issue, I see that Lionel Salter found the recording rather over-reverberant, but maybe the Ambient Stereo effect has tamed it because it struck me having a nice halo around the orchestra and the balance seemed fine. Like LS, I responded to Walter's "deliberate" tempi – this symphony, of the four, surely benefits from taking its time.

Pristine has recently added another eye (ear?) – catching feather to its cap as the destination for people interested in historic recordings by engaging the services of the crème de la crème of the transfer world to its roster of engineers. Mark Obert-Thurn, one of the US's leading restoration engineers and a familiar name to collectors of historic recordings, will be responsible for a new release each month, and knowing the quality of his work on I'm



Historical hunt: Pristine Classical's website





## PASSIONATO.COM DOWNLOADS CHART

### LAST MONTH'S TOP 10 DOWNLOADS FROM PASSIONATO

- 1 Tchaikovsky Souvenir d'un lieu cher Jansen; Mahler CO / Harding (Decca)
- 2 Handel Serse – Crude furie DiDonato; Les Talens Lyriques / Rousset (Virgin Classics)
- 3 Bach Brandenburg Concerto No 3 European Brandenburg Ensemble / Pinnock (Avie)
- 4 Taverner Ex Maria Virgine Choir of Clare College, Cambridge / Brown (Naxos)
- 5 Puccini La bohème Netrebko; Villazon; BRSO / de Billy (DG)
- 6 Rachmaninov Symphony No 3 LPO / Vänskä (LPO)
- 7 R Strauss Four Last Songs Fleming; Munich PO / Thielemann (Decca)
- 8 Hummel Trumpet Concerto Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie / Balsom (EMI)
- 9 Menotti Amahl and the Night Visitors Nashville SO / Mabry (Naxos)
- 10 'Once in Royal David's City' Choir of King's College, Cambridge / Cleobury (EMI)

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The Sunday Telegraph on the concert performance



To celebrate the launch of the chart, Passionato is offering *Gramophone* readers the chance to win one of two pairs of tickets to ■ LPO ([www.lpo.org.uk](http://www.lpo.org.uk)) performance of choice in January 2009.

To enter the draw to win two LPO tickets, please e-mail your name, address and telephone number to [passionato@haymarket.com](mailto:passionato@haymarket.com) and state 'December Draw' in the subject line.

The deadline for entries is December 19, 2008.

**TERMS AND CONDITIONS.** Each winner can choose an LPO performance in January 2009, subject to availability. The closing date is December 19, 2008. The winner's details will be passed on to Passionato, who are responsible for organising the prizes. Prizes are not transferable. Travel is not included. *Gramophone* and Passionato may contact you with news and special offers via post, phone and e-mail. If you do not wish to receive such correspondence please e-mail [datacontroller@haymarket.com](mailto:datacontroller@haymarket.com) and state 'Gramophone Passionato draw' in the subject line.

sure there are going to be ■■ treats in store. His "debut" on *Pristine* is the 1930 (premiere) recording of Constant Lambert's *Rio Grande* with Hamilton Harty playing the piano and Lambert conducting the Hallé Orchestra. I must say that it sounds splendid – but then I love the work. I notice, though, that *Gramophone's* reviewer back in 1930 was less than taken with the music: "I think that music such ■■ this of Mr Lambert's is very limited in scope, but we are happy to have so entertaining ■■ specimen of it."

Before I move on from *Pristine*, a quick reminder that *Gramophone's* own "label", the National Gramophonic Society (which operated between 1924 and 1931), is being gradually transferred and being made available as downloads. There are some really fascinating recordings here – many, of course, firsts. There are also some musicians who went on to great things captured early in their careers – John Barbirolli, for example, or the pianist behind the latest release, Kathleen Long. Her reading of Haydn's G minor Piano Sonata, HobXVI/20, is a model of taste and discernment, and despite its age sounds pretty good! ([pristineclassical.com](http://pristineclassical.com))

**T**he latest version (8.0.1) of iTunes has a feature called Genius, the idea being that it will analyse your music library and make further recommendations based, presumably, on other

people's aggregated purchasing/listening habits. Out of curiosity and by way of research I thought I'd see what happened with classical music. It took quite a long time to find anything in my classical playlist that the Genius seemed ■■ recognise (even the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth was beyond its reach). However, I thought *Carmina Burana's* opening "O Fortuna!" chorus might do the trick...and yes, it *did*. But the suggestions were very strange indeed, ■■ doubt owing to the highly eclectic library of music I store on my laptop. I'd be interested to hear from anyone who has found the experience enlightening!

**I**f you've come to downloading via MP3 files and ■■ finding the sound quality disappointing (though the 320kbps offered by stores like **Passionato.com** and Chandos are pretty impressive and virtually indistinguishable from CD quality), then explore the world of lossless downloads. I've already mentioned FLAC files in connection with *Pristine*, but leading the way here is Chandos and [theclassicalshop.net](http://theclassicalshop.net). There you can acquire your music either as a WAV file (quite large in size but pretty standard for high-quality sound), or as AIFF files, which are recommended for Mac users. I really would recommend spending some time on the site; and try out some of their recordings – which you can be pretty certain have been well engineered in the first place! ●



## Blogwatch

<http://www.emanuelax.com>

An artist's-eye view of the applause debate, by pianist **EMANUEL AX**

I have been trying to find out exactly when certain listeners and performers decided that applause between movements would not be "allowed", or at least would be frowned upon, but nobody seems to have been willing to admit that they were the culprit. Certainly when a composer like Beethoven wrote the symphonies and piano ■■■■ that we hear today in the concert hall, he himself expected that if a movement ended with ■■ flourish, such as the first movement of the Fifth Piano Concerto, the audience would leap to its collective feet and let the composer (and pianist) know that they had triumphed. Mozart often wrote to his family that certain variations or sections of pieces were so successful that they had to be encored immediately, even without waiting for the entire piece to end.

I really hope we can go back to the feeling that applause should be ■■ emotional response to the music...I am always a little taken aback when I hear the first movement of a concerto which is supposed to be full of excitement, passion, and virtuoso display (eg Brahms or Beethoven) and then hear a rustling of clothing, punctuated by a few coughs; the sheer force of the music calls for ■■ wild audience reaction. On the other hand, sometimes I wish that applause would come just ■■ bit later, when ■■ piece like the Brahms Third ■■■■ to an end – it is ■■ beautifully hushed that I feel like holding my breath in the silence of the end. I think that if there were no "rules" about when to applaud, we in the audience would have the right response almost always...just ■■ favour – even if you don't like a concert of mine, please PLEASE applaud at the end anyway.

The sheer force  
of the music  
calls for  
a wild  
audience  
reaction



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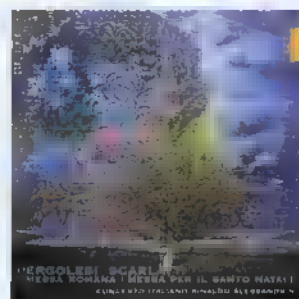
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For more listings, see page 141

## Flanders and song

The exquisite Flemish city of Ghent offers ■ fine festival with ■ healthy dose of the unorthodox, finds Martin Cullingford



### GHENT

**G**hent is a beautiful medieval city blessed with many vistas of sublime elegance, the finest of which might be considered the worthy provincial – in the best possible sense – cousin of the Belgian capital's theatrical Grand-Place.

It's also a good place to play that old parlour game, "how many famous Belgians can you name?" Charles V, Jacob Obrecht, and, more recently, René Jacobs and Philippe Herreweghe, all born here, offer something of a trump hand. You could even throw in John of Gaunt – "of Ghent" ■ old English.

Walking beside the city's River Leie, where gabled town houses line up (or, in some cases, lean) against each other with almost chocolate box perfection, I wouldn't have blinked had a character from a Vermeer painting strolled by. And here it was that the opening day of the Festival of Flanders, Ghent, was staged.

By sunlight the ordered formality of Ghent's gables might have seemed too mercantile for the lush Romanticism of Berlioz's *Nuits d'été*; but come nightfall – the river filled with boats of champagne drinkers, a few strategically placed torch-bearing kayaks and soprano Measha Bruggersman on a floating stage – it all worked perfectly in a rather surreal sort of way. A dramatic dose of fireworks topped it all off.

This first day, called OdeGand, is a mini-festival in itself and sees

venues throughout the city's historic core host a number of performances, each lasting about 45 minutes. A day pass offers entry ■ any of them and travel between them by boat. Each event seemed high on charm but short on length, making it a fairly low-risk strategy to pick the less expected. Being stuck in traffic (should have taken a boat...), I missed pianist Lise de la Salle; a shame, but no worry. Instead I caught a witty and touching piece of performance theatre by Belgian composer Frank Nuyts (the title translates as "The Wider World of Water") which neatly wove the fairy-tale of the Tin Soldier with the more prosaic science of the hydrologic cycle. I also saw some fine Baroque playing from the young ensemble Satyr's Band (full marks for the masks, by the way), which meant I had to forgo some fado, some tango, a Brazilian jazz hybrid, Europe's biggest glass organ, and much more besides.

This blend of the conventional and slightly wacky neatly captures the spirit of the three-week festival, 50 years old but now in its third year under young visionary director Jelle Dierckx. There's a programme of flagship traditional concerts boasting the likes of Rachel Podger and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, and Joshua Bell and the UBS Verbier Festival Orchestra, held either in the City's Cathedral – where I heard Concerto Köln and

Christoph Prégardien, a tenor voice rich in humanity, in Bach's *Ich habe genug* – or in the newly opened De Bijloke Muziekcentrum, a converted medieval hospital with a remarkable wooden roof.

But underneath all that runs a healthy seam of the unorthodox. Halfway through the festival is an event called Avanti, a bit like the OdeGand, only with bicycles, in which people cycle 35km through the East Flanders province, passing concerts and installations en route (another famous son of Ghent, British cyclist Bradley Wiggins, winner of three Olympic golds, would be proud). The festival's final event ■ musicians and multimedia artists remixing *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* in the cells beneath the high court. Meanwhile, university students will have music thrust upon them "guerrilla style" when their lectures begin with short surprise recitals.

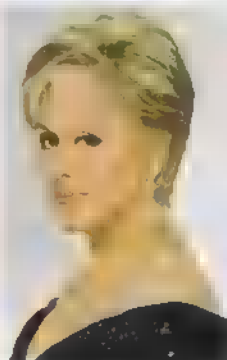
Another must-see for musical visitors lies in the Cathedral. In a city rich in art (visit the fine art gallery, outside the centre, for some superb Flemish primitives), the standout highlight is the remarkable 15th-century Ghent Altarpiece by Herbert and Jan Van Eyck. Among the 24 astonishingly detailed panels ■ two of angel musicians, so exquisitely rendered that it's been possible to work out which note they are singing from the expressions on their faces. ■





CADOGAN HALL

## Christmas at Cadogan Hall



Tuesday 23 December, 7.30pm

### Dame Kiri Te Kanawa

Christmas Gala Concert

With Jonathan Papp piano

Celebrate Christmas in style ■  
Dame Kiri sings seasonal classics  
and songs and arias from her  
favourite operas.



Friday 12 December, 7.30pm

### Orchestra of the Kiev Music Theatre

A celebration Concert for Christmas  
*Tchaikovsky and Strauss favourites*



Saturday 13 December, 7.30pm

### Orchestra of St John's

A family concert featuring Howard  
Blake's *The Snowman*



Sunday 14 December, 7pm

### Academy of Ancient Music

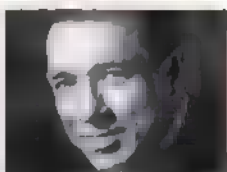
Bach's Christmas Oratorio



Tuesday 16 December, 7.30pm

### Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Christmas Cracker - popular festive  
sing along



Wednesday 17 December, 7pm

### English Chamber Orchestra and Tallis Chamber Choir

Handel's Messiah

Box Office: 020 7730 4500

Book Online: [www.cadoganhall.com](http://www.cadoganhall.com)

Cadogan Hall, Sloane Terrace, London SW1X 9DQ

## Musical journeys



## Doctor Atomic detonates – just

John Adams's opera, in a **new** production at the  
Met, is good but not great, says Robert Hilferty

### NEW YORK

It's June 1945. Physicist J Robert  
Oppenheimer is about to ■ the  
first nuclear weapon, which he's  
brought into existence. He's also on  
the verge of a nervous breakdown.

This is the compelling subject of  
John Adams's opera *Doctor Atomic*,  
which premiered in San Francisco  
in 2005 directed by its librettist,  
Peter Sellars, who ingeniously  
assembled the libretto from  
declassified documents, scientific  
reports, letters and poetry – a true  
“docudrama”. The Met Opera's  
new production, directed by Penny  
Woolcock, opened on October 13  
and will eventually go to ENO.

The periodic table is the first  
thing we ■ ■ Julian Crouch's  
design, ■ we hear electronic sounds  
and old radio songs interrupted  
by harrowing chords. Shards of  
metal rise into mid-air in a kind of  
freeze-frame of an explosion. Three  
levels of cubicles feature photos of  
scientists involved in the project.

Semi-mutinous young scientist  
Robert Wilson (tenor Thomas  
Glenn) confronts Oppenheimer  
(baritone Gerald Finley) about  
dropping the bomb on Japanese  
civilians. The latter snaps back that  
politics is Washington business,  
noting that “the visual effect”  
will be “tremendous”; he's more  
worried his bomb might be a “dud”.

Comic relief comes when General  
Groves (bass-baritone Eric Owens)

threatens meteorologist Frank  
Hubbard (baritone Earle Patriarco)  
with imprisonment if he doesn't  
offer a more agreeable weather  
report. But tension runs high,  
and you hear it in Adams's jagged  
brass-and-timpani rhythms.

After a tender bedroom scene  
with his wife, Kitty (mezzo Sasha  
Cooke), Oppenheimer sings Donne's  
“Batter My Heart”, perplexed  
by the questionable act he's about  
to commit. Act 2 brings a Nature-  
respecting feminine perspective  
with Kitty and her Native American  
maid Pasqualita (alto Meredith  
Arwady), a kind of Cassandra of  
the American Southwest who's not,  
however, fleshed out into a role  
that's more meaningful.

Unfortunately, the momentum is  
hobbled by this counter-cosmology  
with its frequent lapses into precious  
poetry. When Oppenheimer sings  
“It is Eternity that reigns now”, you  
feel it. Conductor Alan Gilbert, who  
balances and draws out the score's  
subtle layers superbly, takes his time  
with the tempi, adding 15 minutes to  
the duration of the recently released  
DVD of Sellars's production.

And Adams's ■ is formidable  
– with its Varèse-like swatches,  
post-minimalist textures and  
sky-reaching lyricism. The great  
rumbling at the end as the bomb  
explodes is unprecedented for the  
Met. But I'm still not convinced  
*Doctor Atomic* is great. ■

# Berlin brotherhood

There's more than one world-class orchestra in the German capital, says Rick Jones

## BERLIN

From 1961 until 1989 the city of Berlin was divided by a huge wall patrolled by guards who shot anyone trying to climb over. In the West there were neon lights, Paris fashions, voting booths, unemployment and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. In the East there was chess, Communism and the Berlin Symphony Orchestra, established in 1945. East Berliners would not feel deprived. The BSO was a big success. The conductor Kurt Sanderling was world-class, the players were young, gifted and enthusiastic, and the audiences that packed their historic home at the Schauspielhaus were ecstatic. War damage reparation transformed the venue from a theatre into a concert hall. It was renamed Das Konzerthaus and the BSO became the Konzerthausorchester Berlin.

"Our supporters from the East have remained loyal," says chief conductor Lothar Zagrosek, a sprightly 66-year-old Bavarian, three years in his post, "but they are getting older and have made way for visitors from the West and tourists. Now we aim to lower the age of the audience. That is the purpose of the Mozart Matinees. Young parents attend the concerts while their children do activities such as learn to dance minuets."

The former principal guest conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra is catching his breath. He's just rehearsed an energetic organ concerto by French composer Thierry Escaich. Zagrosek is committed to the contemporary. He champions the work of German composer Helmut Lachenmann, and made a reputation on Decca's Entartete Musik series of composers that the Nazis proscribed, notably with Ernst Krenek and Berthold Goldschmidt. Simon Rattle rediscovered the latter living in Hampstead in the 1990s.

"Rattle was good for Berlin; he brought a new perspective," says Zagrosek of his younger friend from London days. "We have introduced a chamber music exchange. Berlin Phil players come here, and ours go to the Philharmonie." A recent EMI disc by the BPO flautist Emmanuel Pahud included an appearance by his talented Italian equivalent at the Konzerthaus, Silvia Careddu.

The orchestra has always travelled. In the old days, tours to the West presented the players with an opportunity to defect – which occasionally they took. Next March they come to Britain for an 11-date tour. No one is expected not to want to come home to the Konzerthaus. ☺

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### DECEMBER

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SB, SL and N 0115 91 0000 www.robertsontheatre.co.uk

Sun 14th & Mon 15th BLACKPOOL OPERA HOUSE  
SB and N 01253 292029 www.blackpoollive.com

Wed 17th to Sun 21st EASTBOURNE CONGRESS THEATRE  
SB, SL and N 01323 411000 www.eastbourne-theatres.co.uk

Tue 30th to Tue 30th WIGHTON THE DOME  
N and SB 01273 810000 www.wightonthe-dome.org.uk

Sat 1st SCARBOROUGH FUTURE THEATRE  
N 01753 365789 www.futuristtheatre.co.uk

Sun 4th & Mon 5th BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY HALL  
SL and N 0121 780 1111 www.thsh.co.uk

Tues 11th, Wed 12th & Thu 13th CRAWLEY PALACE  
SB and N 01293 410000 www.crawleytheatre.co.uk

Fri 9th, Sat 10th & Sun 11th SOUTHERN LIFFS PAVILION  
SB and N 01753 365789 www.southernliffs.co.uk

Tue 13th & Sat 17th LYCEUM THEATRE  
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Mon 18th & Sat 24th NORWICH THEATRE ROYAL  
SL 01603 630000 www.theatreroyalnorwich.co.uk

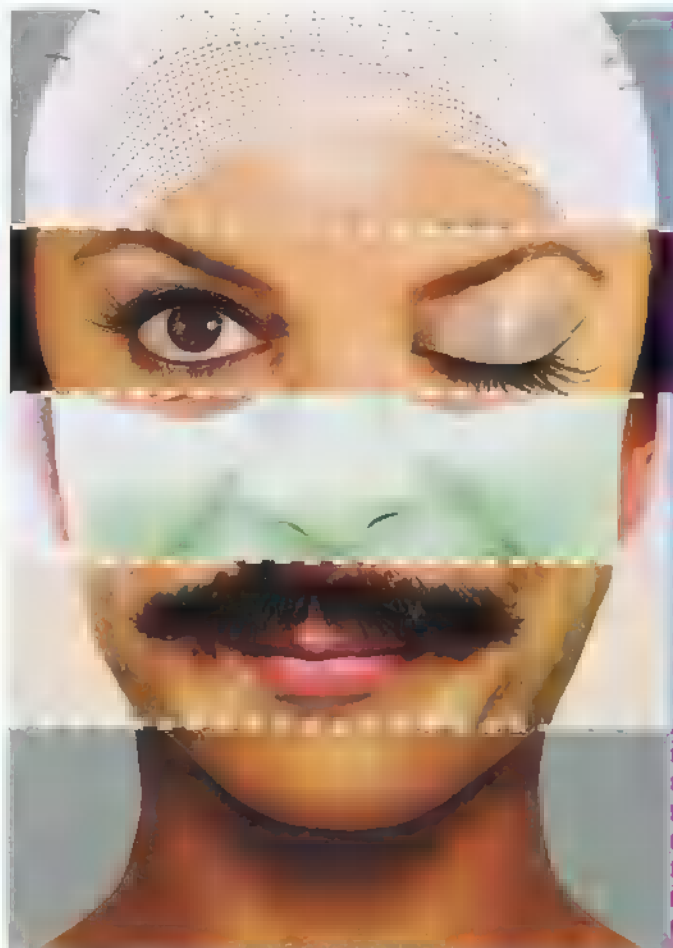
Fri 30th, Sat 31st and Sun 1st Feb BUXTON OPERA HOUSE  
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Photo: KT







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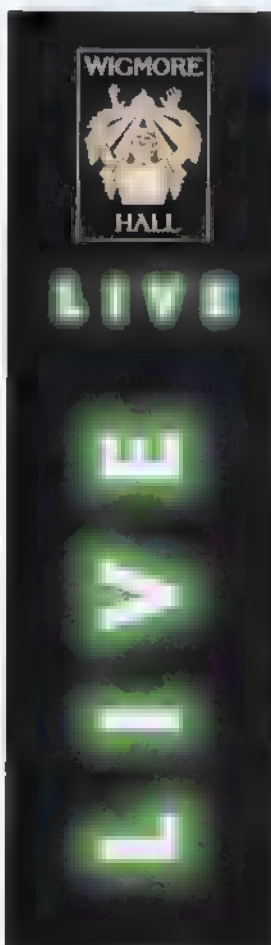
THEATRICAL PRODUCTION

Grand Theatre, Leeds	16, 24, 30 Jan; 4, 11 Feb	0844 848 2728
Sadler's Wells, London	17, 19 Feb	0844 412 4300
The Lowry, Salford Quays	26 Feb	0870 787 5796
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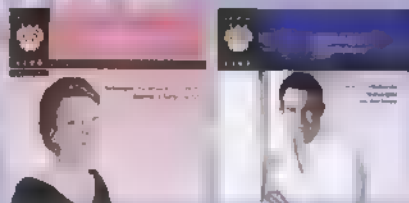
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# The best events worldwide

Russian voices sing Rachmaninov in Manchester, Jurowski conducts Bach's Christmas Oratorio in Moscow and festive celebrations in London: the pick of the performances from around the world



## 3 DECEMBER MANCHESTER Bridgewater Hall

The Russian Patriarchate Choir of Moscow (above) perform

Rachmaninov's Psalms 103 and 104, *Canticle of Simeon*, *Anaphora* and *Hymn to the Mother of God*; plus works by Tchaikovsky, Grachaninov and a selection of Ukrainian and Russian Christmas songs. Details: +44 (0)161 907 9000 / [www.bridgewater-hall.co.uk](http://www.bridgewater-hall.co.uk)

## 3 DECEMBER AMSTERDAM Concertgebouw

Kurt Masur conducts the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in

Dvořák's Symphony No 9, *From the New World*, and Brahms's Piano Concerto No 11 with soloist Nelson Freire, ■ December 3 and 4. Details: +31 20 6718345 / [www.concertgebouw.nl](http://www.concertgebouw.nl)

## 4 DECEMBER BOSTON Symphony Hall

Soloist Daniel Barenboim joins conductor and pianist James Levine in Schubert's Fantaisie, D940, for piano

four hands in ■ concert with the Boston Symphony Orchestra which also includes Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 3, the world premiere of Elliott Carter's *Interventions* for piano and orchestra and Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, on December 4 and 5. Details: +1 617 266 1492 / [www.bso.org](http://www.bso.org)

## 4 DECEMBER MOSCOW Conservatory Great Hall

The Russian National Orchestra performs Bach's Christmas Oratorio

with soprano Ditte Andersen, alto Tim Mead, tenor Mark Padmore, bass Stephan Loges and the Chamber Choir of the Moscow Conservatory, conducted by Vladimir Jurowski. Details: +7 495 128 19 20 / [www.russianarts.org](http://www.russianarts.org)

## 4 DECEMBER CLEVELAND Severance Hall

Mitsuko Uchida conducts and performs ■ soloist with the

Cleveland Orchestra in Mozart's Piano Concertos Nos 23 and 24 on December 4, 5 and 6. Details: +1 216 231 1111 / [www.clevelandorchestra.com](http://www.clevelandorchestra.com)

## 8 DECEMBER NEW YORK Metropolitan Opera

The Metropolitan Opera presents Massenet's *Thaïs*, starring Renée

Fleming in the title-role and Thomas Hampson ■ Athanaël, conducted by Jesús López-Cobos, on December 8, 11, 17, 20, 23, 27 and 30, and January 2, 5 and 11. Details: +1 212 362 6000 / [www.metoperafamily.org](http://www.metoperafamily.org)

## 9 DECEMBER LONDON Spitalfields Winter Festival

The Spitalfields Winter Festival runs December 9-19 and January 5-9 in

various London venues, with performances from Sir John Eliot Gardiner, the Monteverdi Choir and the English Baroque Soloists, Rhodri Davies, Craig Ogden and Anton Lukoszevics. Details: +44 (0)20 7377 1362 / [www.spitalfieldsmusic.org.uk](http://www.spitalfieldsmusic.org.uk)

## 9 DECEMBER CHICAGO Symphony Center

Bernard Haitink conducts the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in

Haydn's Symphony No 101 (the Clock) and Bruckner's Symphony No 7. Details: +1 312 294 3000 / [www.cso.org](http://www.cso.org)

## 11 DECEMBER BERLIN Philharmonie

The Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra performs Bruckner's Symphony

No 11 conducted by Christian Thielemann on December 11, 12 and 13. Details: +49 30 254 999 / [www.berliner-philharmoniker.de](http://www.berliner-philharmoniker.de)



## 13 DECEMBER LONDON St John's Smith Square

The 23rd Annual Christmas Festival runs December 13-23 and includes

performances from the European Union Baroque Orchestra, Joglaresa, Christ Church Cathedral Choir, Bell'Arte Salzburg, Ex Cathedra, the Tallis Scholars, the Cardinal's Musik, Chapelle du Roi, and Polyphony (above) and the Britten Sinfonia in Handel's *Messiah*. Details: +44 (0)20 7222 1061 / [www.sjss.org.uk](http://www.sjss.org.uk)

## 13 DECEMBER LOS ANGELES Walt Disney Concert Hall

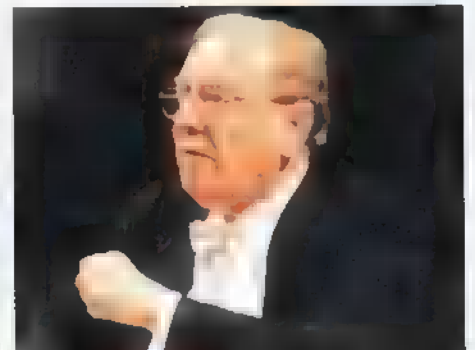
Marin Alsop conducts the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra

in Brahms's *Tragic Overture* and Symphony No 1, and the Violin Concerto with soloist Nikolaj Znaider, on December 13 and 14. Details: +1 323 850 2000 / [www.laphil.com](http://www.laphil.com)

## 17 DECEMBER VIENNA Musikverein

Sir Charles Mackerras (below) conducts the Vienna Philharmonic ■ Mozart's Symphony No 40,

Piano Concerto No 9 (the *Jeunehomme*) with soloist Alfred Brendel in one of his final concerts, and Schubert's Symphony No 11 (the *Tragic*), on December 17 and 18. Details: +43 1 505 81 90 / [www.musikverein.at](http://www.musikverein.at)



## 18 DECEMBER MUNICH Philharmonie im Gasteig

The Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and Mariss Jansons perform

Rodion Shchedrin's *Beethovens Heiligenstädter Testament* and Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony, and are joined by tenor Rafał Bartmiński and chorus for Szymanowski's Symphony No 3. Details: +49 89 590 4545 / [www.br-online.de](http://www.br-online.de)

## 20 DECEMBER DRESDEN Semper Opera House

Christoph Eschenbach conducts the Dresden Staatskapelle in

Bruckner's Symphony No 6 and Bartók's Piano Concerto No 3, for which they are joined by Radu Lupu, ■ December 20, 21 and 22. Details: 0351 4911705 / [www.semperoper.de](http://www.semperoper.de)

## 27 DECEMBER BUDAPEST Béla Bartók National Concert Hall

Iván Fischer conducts the Budapest Festival Orchestra in Brahms's

*Variations on a Theme of Haydn* and Symphony No 1, and Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No 2 with soloist Akiko Suwanai, on December 27 and 28. Details: +36 1 355 4015 / [www.bfz.hu](http://www.bfz.hu)



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## COMING SOON

### BLU-RAY IN A BOX

En/a early 2009

Sony is all set to launch its first Blu-ray-based "home cinema in a box" system, the BDV-T1000. It uses ultra-slim speakers, able to be used in their own stands or wall-mounted, and is complete with HDMI inputs for other components and the company's Digital Media Port, for portable music players.

### CAMBRIDGE AUDIO BLU-RAY DISC PLAYER

En/a early 2009

Due to be launched at the CES trade exhibition at the beginning of January, the Azur 640BD will be the first BD player from the UK-based company, and promises to be an "affordable high-end" design.

## CAMBRIDGE AUDIO FUSION AND SONATA British brand thinks small

**CAMBRIDGE AUDIO** ■ joining the micro-system fray with two new launches – an all-in-one CD receiver with DAB and iPod compatibility, and a complete range of micro-size hi-fi separates.

The Fusion all-in-one, just 21.5cm wide, is supplied complete with iPod dock, and will sell for £299. It has a CD player also able to handle MP3 and WMA files, DAB/FM tuner, a USB input and an SD memory card slot, and 3.5mm front-panel connections for other portable players and headphones.

Its power output is 2x25W, and there's also a subwoofer output.

The Sonata range comprises two receivers, a CD player and a DVD player, each 27cm wide. The £229 AR30 has an FM RDS/AM tuner, 2x40W output and is supplied complete with a bespoke iPod dock.



while the DR30 adds DAB radio for an extra £70.

The £179 CD30 CD player uses a new servo transport and high-grade conversion from Wolfson, while the DV30 DVD player, at the same price, has a 1080p video upscaling chipset and HDMI output.

**Cambridge Audio**  
Tel +44 (0)845 090 2288  
[www.cambridge-audio.com](http://www.cambridge-audio.com)



All-new micro range from Cambridge Audio includes the Fusion (top) and the Sonata mini-separates line-up



## KEITH MONKS launches new model, factory and website

ALMOST 40 YEARS since Keith Monks sold its first Record Cleaning Machine to the BBC, the company is relaunching with new products, a new factory and a new website.

The MkVII Omni has a unique wash system fully adjustable for all sizes of record and sells for £2995, while other models start from £1995. Custom components are used throughout, including the discOvery record-cleaning brush and a unique suction nozzle for drying and disc protection. The pump is a medical grade unit usually found in dialysis machines.

The machines are all built at the new factory on the Isle of Wight, run by Jonathan Monks, son of company founder Keith. There are also new discOvery cleaning fluids, claimed to give the best ever clean from the machines, yet made entirely from botanicals and other plant extracts, plus distilled water. The company is also about to open a new office in the USA to supply and service machines, and next year will launch a 40th anniversary limited edition model.

**Keith Monks**  
Tel +44 (0)1983 857079

[www.keithmonks.com.co.uk](http://www.keithmonks.com.co.uk)

## PRO-JECT revives the record player

REMEMBER THE DAYS when a record player was an all-in-one unit? Pro-ject is harking back to that age with its new Juke Box, which combines a turntable, pre-amplifier and digital power amplifier. All you need add is a pair of speakers.

The new turntable is based on the company's Debut model, which is already available in versions with electronic speed control and USB output for direct connection to a computer. The latest iteration draws on the Pro-ject's Box range of miniature audio components, and has that electronic speed control, a pre-amplifier with line input as well as the built-in phono stage, and a 25W-per-channel power amplifier. Prices have yet to be announced.

**Henley Designs**  
Tel +44 (0)1235 511166  
[www.henleydesigns.co.uk](http://www.henleydesigns.co.uk)



Pro-ject Juke Box with built-in amplifier

## EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...

## Buying the right amplifier

James Vesey suggests that people spend less time considering amplifiers than, say, speakers – and offers hints to ensure you get the right one

**P**EOPLE GET VERY aerated about the choice of some audio components – CD players and speakers, for example – but they put a lot less emphasis on the choice of amplifier. It's not hard to work out why: there's nothing very glamorous about a mainstream hi-fi amplifier, and anyway the purists will tell you that the best amplifier is nothing more than a "straight wire with gain".

In other words, the perfect amplifier should take a signal in at one end, increase its level, and push it out the other end at a much higher level. Like a pump, really – and pumps are hard to get excited about.

Indeed there are plenty of amplifiers out there with little more than input sockets, a passive volume control, a power amplifier stage and speaker outputs. It's also perfectly possible to have a CD player with variable output level with a power amp and speakers, or indeed a pair of active speakers having in-built amplification.

In the real world, however, an amplifier usually needs to be rather more than a simple audio pump. Most of us have more than one sound

source, and the majority will have at least a CD player and a radio tuner, plus perhaps a turntable for playing LPs, a recorder of some kind and maybe even a desire to run the sound from the TV through the hi-fi system.

What's more, while the theoretical audiophile ideal is to buy the simplest amplifier possible,



By no means a complex amplifier, this entry-level model should have all the connections needed for a multi-source audio system

many of us will want to have a second pair of speakers in another room, have access to controls to tweak the sound of particularly aggressive CDs or a remote control able to drive an entire audio system.

So anyone buying a new amplifier needs to take stock of their current and future needs, and buy with as much of an eye to the facilities an amplifier offers as an ear to the sound it makes.

In general, just about any amplifier will work with just about any speakers. At least in purely electrical terms: yes, there are very low-powered amps will struggle to drive speakers of low sensitivity at high listening levels, but in the audio mainstream most amplifiers will work very nicely with the speakers from the major brands.

By the way, if you're planning on running two sets of speakers in two rooms, make sure the amplifier has two sets of speaker outputs, and can handle this: the lower impedance created in such a situation can cause some amplifiers problems if they're low current or have undersize power supplies.

Check, of course, that there are sufficient inputs and outputs for your needs, and bear in mind that many modern amplifiers don't have built-in phono stages for use with a turntable. The solution for this is sometimes an optional dealer-fit module, but otherwise you can buy an external phono stage for as little as £60, or even a turntable with a phono stage built in.

Finally, check that everything works as you want it to, including the tone controls where fitted: some bass and treble adjustments are more subtle in their action than others. In other words, listen – as with all audio buys, it's the best way to ensure you get what you want. **G**

## Infidelities

## Sensible moves afoot on the hi-fi high street

The recent merger of some of the UK's best-known names in audio and home cinema retailing has led to speculation about the state of the industry. After all, at least one chain closed down a number of stores during 2008, and cut-throat price-competition on items such as TVs and mainstream home cinema separates has prices tumbling very rapidly. One manufacturer reduced an AV receiver by £200 to £600, only to see retailers offering it with another £100 off almost immediately. It all plays very nicely into the hands of the doom-merchants.

But as I pointed out last month, the tough economic times have seen more consumers "nesting": rather than spending money on moving house or holidays, we're making the most of the homes we have now. That, and increased broadband internet access, is turning us into a nation of online bargain-hunters.

So the recent joining of Audio T, Audio Excellence and Practical Hi-Fi makes a lot of sense. Each had its own "patch"; now the three, to be rebranded as Audio T, will have 24 shops across a wide spread of the country, a wider range of products, and of course the keener prices made possible by greater buying power.

As well as traditional retail outlets, the group has a "Select" store, selling high-end equipment, on the outskirts of London, and will also be using its 24 outlets as internet pick-up points. Users will be able to order online, then visit one of the shops to collect the goods.

The world of retail is changing, and it's good to see some of the country's specialist retailers finding a way to embrace the trend while still maintaining high street service.

**Andrew Everard**  
Audio Editor

It's good to see specialist retailers embracing the new face of shopping

## Five top amplifier buys

**Marantz PM5003** £220  
Reviewed last month, this is a fine entry-level amplifier buy, with excellent sound, a sensible range of features and no shortage of style.

**Pioneer A-A6** £350  
The spiritual successor to the classic A-400, this is a no-nonsense design offering a lot for the money.

**Audiolab 8000S** £500  
The latest version of a long-running design, this is a simple but effective piece of hi-fi with classic slimline styling and good flexibility.

**Yamaha A-S1000** £895  
Beautifully built, and with a striking combination of retro and modern styling, this is a warm, generous-sounding amplifier that's easy to enjoy.

**Nam Supernait** £2350  
Power in abundance, excellent flexibility and even a digital stage so you can connect your computer, this is very much the modern audiophile amplifier.



## SPENDOR SA-1

## Classic British speaker style, with a sound to match

Andrew Everard finds these small speakers understated and very enjoyable

More than a few British audio companies have been taken over, only to have their brands devalued by over-exploitation. A travelling friend saw an LCD TV with the Rogers name on it not so long back, and admits to thinking "it's all a long way from the LS3/5As".

Fortunately, other famous names have found owners who refuse to dilute their brand values, and indeed build on the reputation of the past. Spendor is a fine example of this: the company, founded back in the 1960s by Spencer and Dorothy Hughes – hence the name – was bought in 2001 by Philip Swift, who started Audiolab, and since that time Swift has developed the brand, and the speakers.

He's done so by sticking with some of the established design thinking, while bringing to the party his own input. Nowhere is that more clear than in the little SA-1s we have here. They're in the classic British mini-monitor mould, at just over 30cm tall, and are of a two-way, sealed-box design.

They're also really rather luxurious, being available in a range of zebano high gloss lacquered veneer, black piano lacquer or satin-finished wenge, with matching stands available. In fact the stands are more than available – they're strongly suggested, coming in black satin lacquer with inlays to match the speakers, and add £400 to the speakers' price. So that's £1500 a pair with stands, or £1100 without.

It's claimed that this is "the most musical and revealing small loudspeaker ever created by Spendor", and there's certainly been a lot of work put into backing up that claim. The SA-1s use the usual Spendor thin-wall damped panel construction, but here it's backed up with rigid bracing and the use of three different thicknesses of material in the enclosure. This means each panel has its own resonant frequency, these working together to damp out any vibration.

The tweeter is a new 22mm "wide surround" unit, said to combine the extended frequency



Spendor SA1s: in the classic British mould

response of small diaphragm with the low-frequency working of a larger design. The midrange and bass, meanwhile, are handled by a 15cm Spendor driver using a magnesium alloy chassis, advanced polymer cone and surround material, and a long-excursion motor.

Spendor says that perfectly balanced phase response, optimum bass alignment and a high level of electrical damping give these speakers impressive bass for enclosures as small, and the sealed design makes them much less fussy about positioning than would be a ported speaker. In other words, if you have to use them against a wall, you can – but that said, the speakers do sound their best when used on the dedicated stands, which have the effect of tightening the bass and giving better low-end definition.

## PERFORMANCE

The SA-1s are a little less sensitive than many less expensive speakers of this size, at 85dB/W/m, but have an easy-going 8 ohm nominal impedance, meaning that massive amplifier power really isn't needed. They also have single-wire terminals,

taking another variable out of the equation, and as mentioned sound best on the dedicated stands.

What really impresses about these little speakers, however, is the way they give a sound that's very much full-scale. What they lack in ultimate bass extension they more than disguise with a low end that's fast, tuneful and entirely convincing, even when tackling a full orchestra, and there's beautiful character down there so they really bring basses and cellos alive.

The rest of the frequency band is just as accomplished, the speakers having a lovely open sound through the midband and up into their sweet but clean treble, which is entirely free of spit or glare, yet capable of revealing the space and atmosphere of a recording. They're also very fine indeed when it comes to the delivery of voices, having a vibrant, open-mouthed tonality that comes up trumps on character and intelligibility.

In fact, these are just about the perfect speakers for those wanting top sound quality in smaller rooms, or indeed those who simply favour a small, unobtrusive, but superb system. They respond well to high-quality amplification but don't demand massive power to be heard at their best, and they back up the quality of their presentation with excellent fit and finish. ●

## SPENDOR SA-1

Type Two-way standmount loudspeakers

Price £1500/pr with stands, £1100/pr speakers only

Drive units 22mm tweeter, 15cm ep38-cone mid/bass

Sensitivity 85dB/W/m

Impedance 8 ohms nominal, 6.3 ohms minimum

Power handling 125W

Accessories supplied Remote handset

Dimensions (HxWxD) 30.5x16.5x19cm

Finishes Zebano high gloss, black piano lacquer, wenge satin

Manufactured by Spendor Audio Systems Ltd, Apex Way,

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## KRELL FBI

## Monster amplifier, huge price but a massive sound

Tony Williams has recovered enough from moving the Krell to explain that he likes it

This should delight those who read these pages and splutter *How much?! The amplifier you see here retails for a frankly amazing £15,250. Most of us will drive a car that cost less; ■■■ of us may even have spent a smaller amount on our homes many years ago. Then again, this is ■■ amplifier that's all about big. It's physically huge, standing some 26cm tall, weighs a little over 47kg and is capable of an output of 300W per channel into 8 ohms, rising ■■ 1200W into 2 ohms. That takes it well beyond what would be considered more than adequate power – suffice it to say you're not going to find many speakers this amplifier will struggle ■■ drive.*

You'll also need ■■ give serious consideration to where you're going to put the amplifier, ■■ most equipment racks won't have enough space to house it, nor be strong enough to bear its weight. A dedicated platform is probably the best bet.

In common with other Krell products, the ■■ is built around a range of in-house technologies. The FB in the model designation stands for Fully Balanced, and to this end the amplifier has balanced inputs as well as the more common RCA phonos. But it also goes further than that in having a set of CAST inputs: these are for Krell's Current Audio Signal Transmission system, and will match the corresponding outputs on the company's CD players, for example. In very basic terms, this system transfers signal using changes in current, not voltage, Krell saying this makes two CAST-equipped products function ■■ a single circuit, with the result that there is greatly enhanced signal integrity.

The FBI also uses Krell's Current Mode amplification technology, which again claims hugely reduced distortion and better signal integrity, and the entire design operates in Class A front to back, which means it isn't exactly the coolest-running

amplifier ■■ the world. It also goes without saying that this is an amplifier placing certain demands on the rest of the system with which it's used. For the purposes of testing I used a high-end Naim player and speakers such as the PMC OB1s and a pair of KEF's Reference series floorstanders.

## PERFORMANCE

Getting this amplifier installed is quite a performance in itself, taking plenty of muscle simply to unbox it, let alone move it into position. But beyond that it's relatively easy to use: big thumb-screw terminals will accept even the heaviest of cables, and the remote control, though chunky and basic, looks after the main functions of the amplifier, and will also control a Krell CD player.

The sound of this amplifier takes some more acclimatisation, however – and that's especially true if you are more used to amplification of relatively low power or with a warm, lush sound. Simply, the Krell sounds quite amazingly dynamic and open, even at very high basic playback levels, but maintains control at low levels, and doesn't miss a bit of the microdynamics of music while taking the really big stuff in its stride.

There's an even, neutral and natural balance to this amplifier that makes everything sound slightly

## KRELL FBI

Type Integrated amplifier

Price £15,250

Output power 2x300W into 8 ohms, 2x600W into 4 ohms, 2x1200W into 2 ohms

Inputs CAST input, balanced, three line-in, tape ■■ Outputs Tape out, pre-amp out, two sets of speaker terminals

Tone controls No

Accessories supplied Remote handset

Dimensions (HxWxD) 48.3x26x52.1cm

Made by Krell Industries Inc, Orange, CT, USA

Distributed by Absolute Sounds, 58 Durham Road, London SW20 0TW

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[www.krellonline.com](http://www.krellonline.com)[www.absolutesounds.com](http://www.absolutesounds.com)

larger than life on first acquaintance, but which one soon accepts as simply being more faithful to what's coming off the disc. The fast, linear and dynamic sound heard ■■ low levels is maintained however loud you ask the amplifier to play, and when you raise the level it just keeps on getting louder, with ■■ shift in tonality or balance.

This isn't an easy list ■■ – not an amp into which you can sink for a warm relaxing wallow. Rather it demands attention and then rewards it with bass you can feel, endless drive and attack, and a beautiful combination of detail and openness. Big orchestral works are thrilling, but the ■■ is just as true of solo instruments, be they attacking or soft. The Krell simply gets you a step closer to the performance. You'll need a big room and the kind of speakers it deserves to drive, and good ventilation: those imposing heatsinks on either side do a very good job of dissipating a lot of heat.

There's no shortage of very fine pre-amplifier/power amplifier combinations available for this kind of money – and indeed less cash. But if you want to keep things simple (!) with an integrated unit, the FBI will probably redefine your expectations of one-box amplification. ■



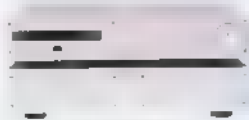
No detail escapes the FBI

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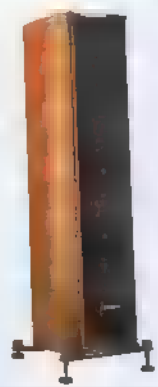
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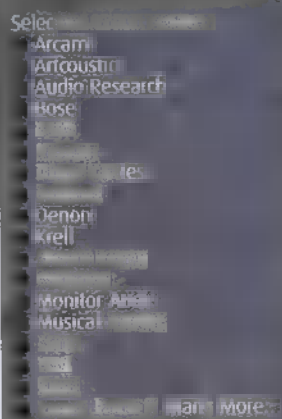
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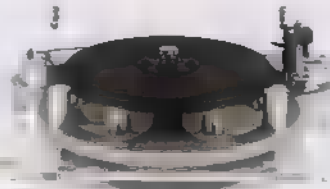
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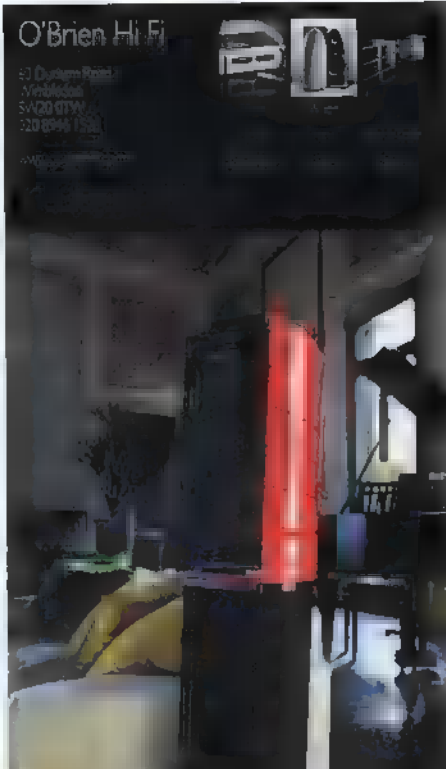
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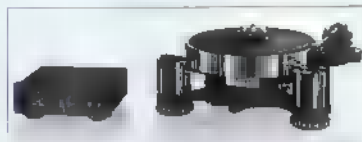
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## DENON D-M37DAB

## Compact system is a perfect second-room choice

James Vesey finds much to like in the latest system in a celebrated line

Denon has an impressive track record when it comes to making very superior little systems. The company may be better known to a whole generation of enthusiasts for its fine multichannel receivers and high-quality DVD players, and for its recent forays into massive home cinema amplifiers and the world's first dedicated Blu-ray Disc transport, but in the mass-market it has carved itself a niche as a maker of systems a cut above the budget micros found on the supermarket shelves.

The D-M37DAB is Denon's latest contender in this market, and on paper looks to offer very good value for money. It sells for £300 complete with the little two-way speakers designed to match it, or £230 as a CD receiver alone, so you can use it with your own speakers or buy some others to match. Not that I'd suggest the latter as being too wise: the standard speakers are really rather good, and one would struggle to find anything else as good for £70.

The RCD-M37DAB CD receiver itself will play CD-R/RW discs as well as standard CDs, and can also handle MP3 and Windows Media Audio files on CD. These compressed files can also be played in via the USB port on the front of the unit, which will accept pen-drives, connections from portable players and the like, while there's also a dedicated terminal on the rear for the Denon ASD-1N, ASD-3N and ASD-3W Control Docks for iPod.

Also to the rear are two sets of analogue ins for external sources and an output for a recorder, and there's also a pre-amplifier-level output for a subwoofer to be used alongside the speakers. A headphone socket on the front panel completes the range of connections, and the remote handset provided will also give track skip and other functions with an iPod in one of the docks.

The tuner section of the receiver offers DAB, FM RDS and AM reception, with 60 station presets available on the digital tuner and 40 on the



**The D-M37DAB: a compact system destined to win Denon many sales**

analogue, while the amplifier offers 2x30W, and has been designed along the same lines as the company's hi-fi separates. That involves simple and straight signal paths, and close attention paid to noise reduction and the lowering of impedance in the main circuit boards. The system has also been tuned in association with Denon staff in the UK.

#### PERFORMANCE

The Denon is exceptionally easy to use – and to enjoy. The whole system feels solidly made and seems likely to be very reliable, and the controls operate smoothly and precisely, adding to the sense of quality here.

And the sound? Well, that's the real revelation: despite its compact dimensions and not-exactly-massive speakers, the D-M37DAB has a presentation with real weight and heft, whether you use the system on solid shelves or some stands or brackets. I'd advise getting the speakers away from the main CD receiver unit if you're to get the best stereo image and focus – the sound is very shut-in and small-scale if the complete system is placed together on the same shelf – but beyond that this little package really does give good weight, and more than adequate detail for a system of this kind. Just as one might expect, given Denon's reputation in this field, in fact.

The speakers manage to have good bite and attack without sounding thin and shrill, Denon's engineers having paid close attention to the operation of the SC-M37 speakers' tweeter, which is ventilated to stop it heating up and sounding compressed, and the two drive units integrate extremely well to give a sound that's as convincing as it is surprising. Indeed, I'd go so far as to suggest this little system performs well beyond expectations of a set-up of this size and this price, and will prove quite an eye-opener for those used to larger conventional systems.

There's excellent dynamic attack, provided you don't ask the impossible of the Denon in terms of filling huge spaces with music at high levels – and fine rhythmic drive, and you can even listen to orchestral warhorses on this system without feeling short-changed. Add in a good radio section and compatibility with portable players, and this is a system perfectly sorted for current requirements, and likely to win many sales for Denon. Whether you want it for a kitchen or study, or as the main system in a smaller living room, you really won't go wrong with the Denon D-M37DAB. ■

#### DENON D-M37DAB

Type Micro system

Price £300 complete, £230 without speakers

Discs played CD, CD-R/RW, MP3/WMA files on CD or USB media

Tuner DAB/FM RDS/AM, 100 presets

Power output 2x30W

Inputs Two line, USB, connection for Denon Control Docks, DAB, FM and AM inputs

Outputs Line, one pair of speakers, subwoofer out, headphones

Accessories supplied Remote handset

Dimensions (HxWxD) CD receiver 21x10.2x30.9cm, speakers 14.5x23.3x23.4cm

Made by Denon, Japan

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The performers are drawn from both sides of that divide: Earl Wild plays the piano concertos, while the equally renowned Borodin Trio plays the two Impassioned trios, while

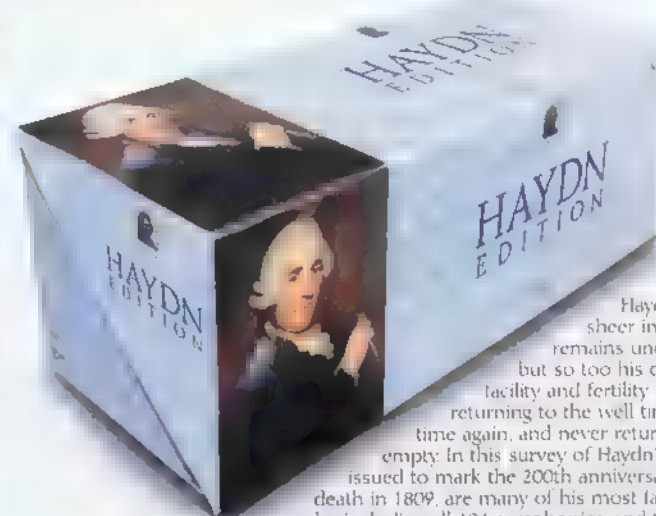
the composer made

There are also recordings of early piano works, especially those previously released, and an extensive introduction to the composer and his work by the Rachmaninoff scholar Julian Haylock on a bonus CD-ROM.

another American virtuoso, Earl Wild, tackles the many transcriptions of Chopin, Bach and others, with the major piano works (the sonatas, preludes and Études) played by Santiago Rodriguez. There are also recordings of early piano works, especially those previously released, and an extensive introduction to the composer and his work by the Rachmaninoff scholar Julian Haylock on a bonus CD-ROM.

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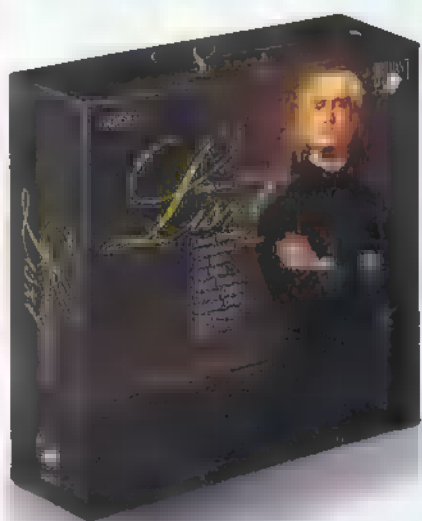
Haydn's sheer industry remains unequalled; but so too his creative facility and fertility in returning to the well time and time again, and never returning empty. In this survey of Haydn's music, issued to mark the 200th anniversary of his death in 1809, are many of his most famous works, including all 104 symphonies, and the piano trios and sonatas. But the set is also unmissable for the collector, including - for the first time on record - the complete folk songs and the complete baryton trios, 20 CDs of each. This is a significant contribution to the anniversary of one of the great composers, with much new material, and at an unbeatable price. A bonus CD-ROM contains an essay exploring Haydn's music, genre by genre, by the Haydn authority Richard Wigmore.



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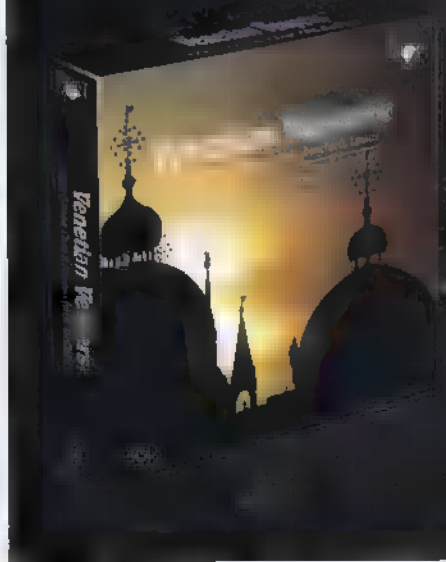


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## Venetian Vespers

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and the Gabriel Fauré become famous for their recreations of the great liturgical set pieces of the Venetian 16th and early 17th centuries. This box reissues several classic recordings originally made for DG, at super-budget prices. To imagine this fine recording of Gabriell's music being superseded for some time to come is a heroic feat. Gramophone Venetian Vespers

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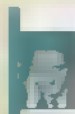
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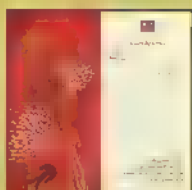
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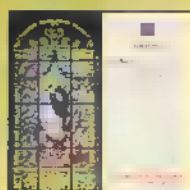
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				Ave Virgo sanctissima	116	Westminster Abbey'	119





I began to realise how big a role my own musical experiences could play in film

## Robert Redford

The Sundance Kid on the impact of classical music – particularly Pachelbel – on his film directing

I grew up in a – to dignify it – lower working-class neighbourhood in south-west Los Angeles. But, despite our surroundings, my mother and father danced constantly. They happened to be at the Ocean Park Auditorium when Benny Goodman got to the end of a tour that hadn't gone well. He told his band to cut loose and the result was the pivotal *Sing, sing, sing*. This was new, revolutionary – it was jazz rather than string band music. My parents carried that moment with them, so I grew up with music a big part of my life (my father's family were all string-players and taught music back east in Connecticut). I didn't play but as a kid was influenced by Goodman and the then ultra-modern Stan Kenton.

The transforming moment for me was when I was 15 and dating an older woman – of 20! She got me into The Haig, a small club in L.A., a teeny, shed-like place across from the old Ambassador Hotel. "I want to show you something new," she said. It was a dark room with a lot of smoke in it, but everyone was wearing sunglasses and there was Chet Baker, Gerry Mulligan and Red Mitchell on bass.

They looked weird, particularly Mulligan, who resembled a scarecrow. Baker looked like a teenager. Suddenly they started to play and it was like a spear running through me. It was a sound I'd never heard before, and there, in 1953, I heard the new movement of jazz.

Later I went to San Francisco to follow jazz. I stumbled into a place where I thought I'd find some, and it was the City Lights bookstore. It wasn't jazz there, but readings of beat poetry. This was just as new, so the combination of these two original voices in two fields caught the mood for me and many colleagues of an era that was fresh and a culture that was reinventing itself. It was exciting and I hooked into it.

Aged 19, I went to Europe to study art. I was on the bum, travelling around and getting my education by simply being in the world, when I discovered classical music. I heard it in Italy and in the streets of Paris and slowly drifted

towards it. I went to concerts of Bach, Vivaldi and Wagner, which was as fresh to me, a kid from California, as jazz. I responded to the depth and the feeling of it.

Years later, when I got into film and had the chance to direct or produce my own, I could have a hand in the musical score. By that time music had a profound effect on me and I considered it deeply important to film, which is a collaborative medium, no matter who touts the auteur theory.

So I drew on my own experience. Just before I directed my first movie I was in a place called Big Sur (California), which had a long, winding road in those days, of 65 miles or so. I'd decided to hike it, to

understand its mysteries – this being 1962. I stayed at the Big Sur Inn, where, because there was a thick fog, I remained for three days and three nights while the road was closed. The old Norwegian guy who'd built this shack played classical music every night while we ate and drank.

He played me the Pachelbel Canon, and it was absolutely haunting. When I got home I promptly forgot the name and never heard it again; it wasn't hugely famous back then. About 15 years on, I was in Big Sur working on a film with Sydney Pollack and suggested eating at the inn. The guy had died in the meantime, but during dinner I heard the Canon again. I ran into the kitchen and they told me its name. When I was directing *Ordinary People* I asked Marvin Hamlisch to use it in the movie (he didn't know of it). Through that film it became better known (and I eventually got sick of it – suddenly it was played everywhere!), and I began to realise how big a role my own musical experiences could play in film.

Now I listen to as much classical music as I can. At the Tuscan Sun Festival this year I read poems to improvised music. There are plans to bring more music to my Sundance Institute. Classical music will always be around – it's survived time and fashion, and has far deeper roots than most types of music. As for Hollywood music, most of that originates from classical music anyway.

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